Universidade de Lisboa

Faculdade de Letras


# WHAT IS POETIC ATTENTION

**Bernardo Manzoni Palmeirim**

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**Bernardo Manzoni Palmeirim**

Tese orientada pelo Professor Miguel Tamen (Programa de Teoria da Literatura, Universidade de Lisboa) e pelo Professor Brett Bourbon (Department of English, University of Dallas), especialmente elaborada para a obtenção do grau de doutor em Teoria da Literatura

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## Abbreviations

### Aristotle

**DA**: *De Anima*

**NE**: Nichomachean Ethics

**PN**: *Parva Naturalia*

### Hadot, Pierre

**PWL**: Philosophy as a Way of Life

### Heidegger, Martin

**BT / H**: (H indicates standard page no. to German text)

**WCT**: "What is Called Thinking?"

- From *Poetry, Language, Thought*:

**BDT**: "Building Dwelling Thinking"

**PMD**: "Poetically Man Dwells"

**TT**: "The Thing"

**WPF**: "What are Poets For?"

### James, William

**PP**: Principles of Psychology

**VRE**: The Varieties of Religious Experience

### Nussbaum, Martha

**LK**: Love's Knowledge

**TD**: The Therapy of Desire

### Vlastos, Gregory

**IM**: Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher

**SS**: Socratic Studies

### Weil, Simone

**GG**: Gravity and Grace

**WG**: Waiting for God

### Wittgenstein, Ludwig

**CV**: Culture and Value

**GB**: Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough

**LC**: Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief

**LE**: Lecture on Ethics

**PI**: Philosophical Investigations

**RC**: Remarks on Color

**TLP**: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

# Resumo alargado em português

## O que é 'atenção poética'

Falta um ponto de interrogação no meu título. A razão para tal esclarecer-se-á aquando a leitura de alguns dos poemas incluídos nesta dissertação. De momento gostaria de dizer que o termo levanta a questão da relação entre estética e ética no campo da 'poesia'. Numa primeira aproximação, 'atenção poética' sugere quer i) uma maneira de ler poemas, ou ii) uma maneira de ler o mundo e os seres 'poeticamente'. O sentido i) relaciona-se com a estética na medida em que atribuímos um determinado valor a textos, ii) com a ética na medida em que um sentido de valor ou de presença vem preencher coisas e pessoas, ou até o mundo em geral. Teremos de apurar o que é que este sentido de valor significa em cada caso. Cada instância implica dois papéis: em i) o leitor é um crítico, o escritor um farmacêutico; em ii) o leitor é um crente, o escritor um oráculo. Portanto, a qualificação de 'poético' em i) refere-se sobretudo a textos, e em ii) ao mundo; ainda que o quadro de inspiração (ii) signifique que o leitor i) amiúde entende que poemas são coisas que nos mediam o mundo, que capturam 'vislumbres do mundo real' – sendo ícones. Nesta visão, poemas são portanto vistos como coisas que falam mundês através de oráculos, um uso especial de linguagem que revela mundo através de uma maneira 'atenta' de ler. Esta tese prende-se sobretudo com a inspiração como o principal mito vinculado à ideia de atenção. A gramática deste mito requer investigação. Como poemas, todos os mitos são parte sentido parte absurdo; e assim, tal como quando lemos poemas, chegar à parte do sentido tem muito a ver com a forma como lemos.

A principal diferença entre os dois casos acima mencionados é a do poeta enquanto farmacêutico (ou num sentido semelhante, ilusionista), referindo-se ao ofício dos poetas e à sua habilidade em manipular a linguagem. A imagem do poeta enquanto farmacêutico pretende expressar conhecimento na criação de efeitos. A fórmula do químico é uma mistura exacta de ingredientes concretos (sobretudo palavras, mas também outras convenções publicamente aceites, tais como a pontuação e o espaçamento), articulada de tal maneira que se um elemento químico for retirado, o efeito desejado cai por terra. Do ponto de vista material, poemas são coisas trabalhadas artesanalmente na linguagem. O tipo de efeito que as palavras têm sobre nós é amplamente designado como 'significado'. O que conta como significado na leitura de poemas é algo que tem de ser apurado. Contudo, tal como com drogas, a constituição, disposição e contexto de uma pessoa particular determinará a sua reacção: não há uma reacção, puramente mecânica, que possa ser matematicamente repetida. As reacções também podem ser boas ou más, pois os efeitos são frequentemente imprevisíveis (a serpente no bastão de Asclépio), e têm que ser determinados caso a caso. Os farmacêuticos e os físicos deveriam acompanhar os seus pacientes. Mas em poemas só há palavras e os seus efeitos, não há mãos que nos orientem.

As principais perguntas por detrás desta dissertação são: que tipo de atenção é atenção poética? Isto implica perguntar o que constitui cada termo da expressão: atenção e poesia. Dado que a poesia não é uma coisa, como o são poemas, então como é que a atenção poética se relaciona com a compreensão do discurso – e o cariz desta compreensão e deste discurso? É ela mesma um discurso – e nesse sentido é a atenção poética mais um escutar do que um falar? Em jogo está um

quadro, uma imagem bastante tradicional: a inspiração. Pode o mito da inspiração funcionar como um modelo filosoficamente plausível, dadas certas restrições? Quais? E dado o tema recorrente das implicações estéticas e éticas da poesia, em que sentido é que estes dois termos podem funcionar juntos? Para tal teremos de os comparar no contexto da poesia.

Esta dissertação focará sobretudo ideias sobre poesia – atenção, linguagem, mente, o pensar – dentro do pensamento filosófico. Contudo, analisarei também uma breve selecção de poemas, dedicando essa leitura a poemas que falem sobre linguagem e sobre a natureza da poesia em si (como um chamamento à atenção poética propriamente dita). Contudo, estou fundamentalmente interessado naquilo que é a leitura de *poemas*; e no contexto da minha discussão, a palavra 'poesia', enquanto chamamento para o pensamento teórico é, na maior parte dos casos, um sintoma de confusão.

A minha dissertação mover-se-á centripetamente em espiral em direcção à antiga concepção de '*logos*', voltando atrás no tempo através dos temas chave que estruturam os diferentes tipos de atenção que, por sua vez, organizam os quatro capítulos, nomeadamente: oração e poesia (terapia, e atenção a ideias e presença), contemplação e meditação (métodos e atenção ao eu), *nous* e *logos* (formas de percepção e atenção a seres), escutar e falar (atenção a palavras e a *logos* em si). Ainda que a progressão dos capítulos vá, respectivamente, desde o Cristianismo, Estoicismo, e Aristóteles, até Sócrates e Parmênides, a minha intenção não é de todo a de fornecer um relato histórico da atenção. Tal projecto estaria fora do meu alcance e do meu âmbito actual. Esforcei-me, sobretudo, por tentar encontrar semelhanças e diferenças entre as ideias chave e crenças associadas aos tópicos de atenção e poesia, e em como estas se relacionam (sobretudo no mito da inspiração, cujo paralelo religioso é a contemplação). O facto de que existe, no entanto, mais do que um só uso de 'atenção' torna-se evidente ao observar como certos aspectos chave foram mudando ao longo do tempo. Para além disso, uma dissertação não é uma escrita livre, mas pressupõe escrever sobre os ombros de outros, como forma de atingir um terreno comum; por todas estas razões, irei continuamente retornar a certos pontos estruturais, começando por deixar algumas pistas que serão desenvolvidas com citações à medida que prosseguimos, progressivamente formando um *corpus* temático alargado, enquanto nos movemos em espiral em direcção à origem temporal denotada por '*logos*'. Este movimento é pertinente para a atenção, pois como poemas e *procheiron* indicam, certos textos e actividades requerem tempo, repetição e um voltar a – se é que devemos ler e fazê-lo bem, se é que devemos 'aprender de cor(acção)'.

A chave, creio, para que 'atenção' signifique a respeito de inspiração (ou seja, enquanto atenção contemplativa, o meu problema inicial do Cap.1) é mostrar como se trata, contra a crença popular, de uma forma de pensar. Uma vez que estou interessado em inspiração como um modo de atenção poética, terei muito a dizer acerca do que é orar e misticismo. Sinto que deveria acrescentar algo sobre este assunto, pois não me considero religioso em nenhum sentido comum, ainda que tenha tido uma educação cristã quando era mais novo. Também não tenho uma inclinação metafísica, ainda que me recorde vividamente de balouçar entre fases metafísicas de idealismo e realismo, respectivamente inspirado por determinados autores, filósofos e poetas. Estilos de escrita são formas de pensar, e nestas 'acreditamos', na medida em que nos afectam com as suas palavras. O mundo é assim visto de uma certa maneira. Mas mesmo antes de qualquer

sistema de pensamento vem o misticismo, a compreensão de que o mistério e a maravilha jazem, latentes e inexplicavelmente, no centro da nossa existência. O misticismo incita, motiva um certo tipo de pensamento: sobre o todo. Irei portanto considerar a religião no sentido de William James: 'os sentimentos, actos e experiências dos homens individuais na sua solidão, na medida em que se apreendem em relação àquilo que possam considerar divino.' (VRE 31) O que, para os efeitos desta dissertação, me interessa na religião é uma certa atitude em relação às coisas. É nesta região mais indefinida que a religião é congénere do pensamento poético, tal como orações podem partilhar uma atitude comum com poemas. Pois pensar o 'divino' também comporta acima de tudo uma atitude - antes de lhe ser dada uma forma, de ser concebida como uma espécie de coisa ou deus: 'Deve haver algo solene, sério e afectuoso em qualquer atitude que denominemos como religiosa... O divino significará para nós tão só uma tal realidade primitiva à que o indivíduo se sinta impelido a responder solene e seriamente, jamais reagindo de forma insultuosa ou com chalaças.' (VRE 38)

Esta seriedade é tomada como uma atitude, mas advém do pensamento, do pensar a vida como um todo – o que significa uma consciência dos seus limites. O sentimento de perfeccionismo é aquilo que cresce dentro desta seriedade. Mas ter ideias sobre a vida é ter crenças; e portanto só podem ser ditas no modo próprio à poesia, que é a alegoria, o mito. A morte corresponde a tal tipo de crença: pois é claramente algo que ninguém pode saber. (Experienciá-la é já não ser capaz de a contar.) Certos poemas e orações recordam-nos da morte – e, assim, de que estamos vivos. Certos poemas e orações recordam-nos da vida e da maravilha da existência evocando o ser dos seres através de imagens, ou tematicamente. E toda a boa poesia nos recorda da vida ao levar-nos de volta ao limite oposto da morte: à origem que é a linguagem. A boa poesia é uma experiência com a linguagem. Torná-la viva é o que significa 'atenção poética'.

A viragem linguística na história da filosofia (nomeadamente com Wittgenstein) recuperou a atenção dos filósofos - trazendo-a de volta do mundo das ideias e teorias – para a forma *como* falamos sobre as coisas. Poemas são um caso muito interessante a este respeito, pois é o uso de linguagem onde mais importa – ao mais ínfimo detalhe - o como dizemos. Estou interessado em poesia – as ideias que temos em relação aos usos estranhamente maravilhosos a que submetemos a linguagem, e a disfrutamos como tal – porque poemas (as coisas que geram tais ideias) parecem conduzir-nos de volta a uma relação íntima com o mundo. Orações fazem o mesmo, mas apenas para o crente: neste caso as palavras são, em geral, formalmente mais secas, e apenas implicam aquele para quem o quadro geral, a forma de vida, a que estas palavras pertencem seja aceite de antemão. Ainda assim a sua meta é semelhante, e como tal de interesse directo para uma compreensão da ideia de poesia. Não se trata de inventar e outorgar através de palavras, mas de descobrir o que está lá. Neste sentido, sou um realista. Na minha discussão sobre poesia não estarei, portanto, a falar de ficção, mas de revelação. Uma discussão acerca da linguagem é necessária pois é na divisão das águas que a mente nasce.[1]

[1] Ao falar de rituais onde se venera(va) o carvalho, Wittgenstein diz: 'Pode-se dizer que não foi a sua união (do carvalho e o homem) que deu origem a estes rituais, mas num certo sentido a sua separação. Pois o despertar do intelecto advém de uma separação do *solo* original, a base original da vida. (A origem da *escolha*.) (A forma do espírito que desperta é a veneração.) (GB 139)

# Introduction

## What is 'poetic attention'

My title is missing a question mark. The reason for this will become clearer when we read some of the poems included. For now I would like to say that the term raises the issue of the relation between aesthetic and ethics in the field of 'poetry'. At first sight, 'poetic attention' suggests either i) a way of reading poems, or ii) a way of reading the world and beings, 'poetically'. Sense i) relates to aesthetics in that we ascribe a certain value to texts, ii) to ethics in that a sense of value or presence comes to cover things and people, or even the world in general. What value means in each case must be ascertained. Two roles are involved in each instance: in i) the reader is a critic, the writer a pharmacist; in ii) the reader is a believer, the writer an oracle. So 'poetic' in i) mostly refers to texts, and ii) to the world; and yet the picture of inspiration (ii) means reader i) often takes poems to mediate us and the world, to capture 'glimpses of the true world' - as icons. Poems are thus taken to speak worldish through the oracle, a special use of language that reveals world through an 'attentive' way of reading. This thesis is mostly about inspiration as the leading myth of attention. The grammar of this myth needs investigation. Like poems, all myths are part sense part nonsense; and so, as when reading poems, getting to the sense part of the myth has a lot to do with how we read.

The biggest difference between the two cases above is that of the poet as pharmacist (or in a similar sense, illusionist), which refers to the craft of poets and their skill at manipulating language. The image of the pharmacist is meant to express knowledge in creating effects. The chemist's formula is a precise mix of concrete ingredients (mostly words, but also other publically-understood conventions such as punctuation and spacing), which articulate in such a way that if a single chemical is withdrawn, the desired effect will not occur. From a material point of view, poems are things crafted in language. The general effect particular to words is largely called 'meaning'. What meaning means in the reading of poems has to be ascertained. Yet as with drugs, the constituency, mood and context of the particular person will determine the reaction: there is no purely mechanical reaction that can be mathematically repeated. Reactions may also be good or bad: effects are often unpredictable (the snake of the Rod of Asclepius), and have to be determined case-by-case. Pharmacists and physicians should accompany their subjects. But in poems there are only words and their effects, no guiding hands.

The main questions guiding this dissertation will be: What kind of attention is poetic attention? This implies asking what constitutes each term of the expression: attention and poetry. Given that poetry is not a thing like poems are, how is poetic attention related to the understanding of discourse – and what are the traits of this understanding and of this discourse? Is it itself a discourse - and if so, then is poetic attention more of a listening or a speaking? There is a traditional picture at play here: inspiration – can this be read as a philosophically plausible model, given certain constraints? Which? And given the recurring talk of aesthetic and ethical implications in poetry, in what sense can these terms be understood in comparison to each other?

I shall mostly focus on ideas about poetry - attention, language, mind, thinking - within philosophical thought. However, I will also analyze a short selection of poems, where I will be especially interested in poems that talk about language and the nature of poetry itself (as a summons to poetic attention proper). Yet it is the reading-of *poems* I am ultimately interested in: and within this discussion the word 'poetry', as a pull into theories, is often symptomatic of a befuddlement.

The progression of my dissertation will be that of centripetally spiraling toward the ancient conception of '*logos*', revolving backwards in time through the key themes that structure the different kinds of attention organizing the four chapters, namely: prayer and poetry (therapy, and attention to ideas and presence), contemplation and meditation (methods and attention to self), *nous* and *logos* (forms of perception and attention to beings), listening and speaking (attention to words and *logos* itself). Although the dissertation travels back in time, respectively moving from Christianity, Stoicism and Aristotle to Socrates and Parmenides, my intention is most certainly not that of providing an historical account of attention. Such a project would be well beyond my reach and my present scope. My effort was mostly that of trying to find similarities and differences in the key ideas and beliefs associated with the topics of attention and poetry, and how these relate (most notoriously in the myth of inspiration, whose parallel in religion is contemplation). That there is more than one use for 'attention', however, is made visible by looking at key aspects in its changes throughout time. Also, since a dissertation is not freestyle writing, but instead presupposes writing on the shoulders of others for some common ground; I shall, for these reasons keep returning to certain structural points, by initially dropping hints that will be citationally developed as we proceed, slowly forming a part of a larger thematic body, as we spiral toward the temporal origin denoted in '*logos*'. This movement is pertinent to attention, for as poems and *procheiron* indicate, certain texts and activities require time, repetition and going back to - if one is to read and do 'well', and also if one is to 'learn by heart'.

The key, I believe, to making 'attention' signify in regards to inspiration (i.e. as contemplative attention, my initial problem in Ch.1) is to show how it is, against popular belief, a form of thinking. Since I am interested in inspiration as a mode of poetic attention, I shall be talking a lot about prayer and mysticism. I feel I should briefly say something about this, for I do not take myself as being religious in any ordinary sense, even though as a child I was educated as a Christian. And neither am I of the metaphysical persuasion, even though I do vividly recall veering between metaphysical phases of idealism and realism as I was respectively inspired by certain authors, philosophers and poets. Styles of writing make for systematized ways of thinking, and these are 'believed', as they affect us with their words. The world is then seen in a certain way. Yet before any such systems of thought, there is mysticism, a comprehension that mystery and wonder lie, very inexplicably, at the core of our existence. Mysticism prompts, motivates thinking of a particular kind, about the whole. I therefore want to consider religion in the sense William James defines it: 'the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.' (VRE 31) So it is a sort of attitude towards things that I intend to consider. It is in this more indefinite region that religion matters to poetic thinking, just as prayers may share a common attitude with poems. For to think the 'divine' also comports first of all an attitude, before it might be given a form,

conceived as a sort of thing or god: 'There must be something solemn, serious, and tender about any attitude which we denominate religious . . . The divine shall mean for us only such a primal reality as the individual feels impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely, and neither by a curse nor a jest.' (VRE 38)

This seriousness is felt as an attitude, but comes out of thinking, out of thinking life as a whole – which means an awareness of its limits. Perfectionism is what grows within this seriousness. But ideas about life can only be beliefs; and thus can only be spoken in the mode of poetry that is allegory, myth. Death is such a belief: for it is plainly something no one can know. (To experience it is to no longer be able to tell of it.) Some poems and prayers remind us of death – and thus remind us we are alive. Some poems and prayers remind us of life and the marvel of existence by evoking the thought of the being of beings, through imagery, or thematically. And all good poetry reminds us of life by taking us back to the opposite limit of death: the origin that is language. Good poetry is about experiencing language. Making it come *alive* is what 'poetic attention' means.

The linguistic turn in philosophy, namely of Wittgenstein, has brought the attention of philosophers back from ideas and theories to *how* we talk about things. Poems are a very interesting subject-matter in this respect, for they are precisely the language use that most cares - to the finest detail, actually - about how we say things. I am interested in poetry - the ideas we have regarding the strangely wonderful uses we submit language to, and enjoy it as – because poems (the things that generate these ideas) seem to take us back to an intimate relation with the world. Prayers do the same thing, but only for the believer: words in prayers are, generally speaking, formally drier, and only fully implicate the reader once the general picture, the form of life, they belong to has been acknowledged beforehand. Yet their goal is similar, and as such of direct interest to an understanding of the idea of poetry. It is not a question of inventing and delivering through words, but of discovering what is there. In this sense, I am a realist. So in my discussion of poetry I will not be talking about fiction, but disclosure. A discussion of language is necessary because it is the watershed where mind is born.[2]

[2] Commenting on rites where races venerate(d) the oak tree, Wittgenstein says 'One could say that it was not their union (the oak and man) that has given rise to these rites, but in a certain sense their separation. For the awakening of the intellect occurs with a separation from the original *soil*, the original basis of life. (The origin of *choice*.) (The form of the awakening spirit is veneration.) (GB 139)

## Chapters Overview

In Ch. 1 I shall introduce the problematic of attention as traditionally linked to the notion of therapy in philosophy. Therapy is tied to both poetry and prayer as oracular divination and thereby to the myth of inspiration, whose religious analogue is contemplation. In Western philosophy, attention has traditionally been related to this 'detached thinking' and to the 'intuitive perception' of universals, the Platonic forms. Oracles were healers, regarded as having the divinatory knowledge to communicatively bridge natural and supernatural worlds. The belief that there are two worlds in the first place has enormous repercussions, most notably the Cartesian separation between earthly body and thoughtful, partly divine mind. Cartesian dualism, which lies at the heart of Western metaphysics, is foregrounded in Sartre's *The Nausea* as existential suffering. The redemptive cure for healing his relation to the world, the novel suggests, may lie in Roquentin's seizing of the mood of fresh possibilities that come when he heeds to a song. Suddenly, beauty magically changes everything. This is an idea of poetry. Analogously, Weil's conversion was triggered by attention to a poem: Christ came to her because of her repeated reading of a poem. The structural similitude between redemption and conversion (change, *metanoia*) underlies the oracular pictures of inspiration and grace - and their respective textual counterparts, poetry and prayer, which we shall start to compare in this chapter and pry some similitudes, given their common root of *epode*, as well as differences. This contrast will help bring out ideas about what it is to read poems, and the relations between aesthetics and ethics, words and attitudes.

In Ch. 2 we shall look at the training of attention and its methodologies within the Christian and Stoic traditions, and their focus on moral education. Vigilance is prescribed as the practice of attention directed at the self and its intentions, beliefs, attitudes, thoughts. Within the soul, distractions are the evils that make us forget to listen to the Christian voice of the 'heart' or the Stoic voice of the 'true self', which will always, tradition says, show us the right way. This is, after all, what we usually call 'conscience'. All we need to do is train ourselves to pay attention to ourselves. Here the healing of the rift was not regarded as an attention to an external 'object' but as self-reflection, an attention to our own 'inner' faculty of *logos*. Before Christianity, therefore, the direction of our attention was inverted. We shall here move more insistently from contemplation alone to the tandem recourse to meditation as a disciplined practice of attention. The latter kind of thinking is often neglected due to the comparatively forceful impact of the former experience, but is, notwithstanding, essential to it (just as interpretation is key to poetry). We shall here pursue in more depth ideas about the relations that arise between paying attention to the self and to words. Both are enmeshed within the concept of *logos*, which simultaneously meant mind and the discourse of mind, thus condensing the inescapably strange tension between the concepts of mind, world and language.

In Ch. 3 we shall look at attention to beings as main element in Aristotle's investigation of perception in DA, namely as an apprehension that conflates sense perception (*aisthesis*) and incorporeal understanding (*noesis*). As we have seen, this combination will be later grow apart in the logocentric tradition, as rationalism separates apprehension and abstracts understanding as 'pure thinking' from sense perception. Husserl's (and then Heidegger's) return to phenomenology was

largely a reaction to this abstraction (this forgetfulness) of theoretical discourse. This step backward into phenomena, of perception as a form of implicit understanding (grasping) of beings, indicates a certain path for philosophical thinking: a realist return to world and innerworld beings, although phenomena themselves, as the Stoic also kept reminding us, can (like words) delude us. So the imagination is a power of the mind that must be checked, as Marvell ironizes in "The Garden". Seeing beings as they truly are is the key attribute of perception, that which rightfully constitutes knowledge. Yet all this, as Aristotle implies, takes place through language and the making of, a growing into the understanding of, a world. Things only come into life through our attention to beings. Yet we do not always perceive in the same way: things we do not know have to be imagined before they can be scientifically examined (Vico). We see effects before we ascertain causes; and moreover, there are sometimes effects we simply cannot ostensively determine the cause of. Thus myth precedes science.

In Ch.4 we shall delve deeper into myth and the foundations of writing, especially by looking at irony, ambiguity and attention to words in the *Charmides*. With Socrates we shall return to the idea of philosophical therapy from a different angle, that of the poet as the masked, playful oracle that instigates others to implicate themselves in the reading of Delphic inscriptions. Either/or logocentric thinking sets up reason against allegory. By extension, this logic had served to defend the *presence* of speech (which the oracle has magical mental access to) against the unhinged materiality and playfulness of writing. We shall follow Derrida's attempt to deconstruct logocentrism and try to focus on the original term with later Heidegger, which will take us back to the myth of inspiration, and the notion of myth itself as arising out from the equiprimordial source of *logos*. With myth, the significance of memory is most visible. Value is to survive, whether in writing or other ritualistic sacraments, if our lives are to be vested in meaningfulness. Perhaps then we may be able to conceive philosophically plausible modes for the writing and reading of poems, hoping that play can be taken, reasonably, seriously.

NB: To organize space, I have placed certain poems and longer excerpts as endnotes. It is most significant that the reader takes the time to read these before proceeding into the commentary on those poems.

Endnotes are numbered as lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii) footnotes as Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3).

## Future work

For reasons of space, I have had to curtail a significant portion of my research. There are more pressing issues I would like to return to in the future. The first major text I most researched was the early and rather neglected Platonic dialogue, *Charmides*. Since it rather densely compiles many of the themes I shall discuss here, I shall use but a small part of that research here, concentrating on ambiguity and irony in Ch.4. Regarding the potentially transformational effects of the style of thinking and writing within the general mode of *pharmakon* (Ch.4), I would be interested in further exploration of the relations between the styles of Weil and Wittgenstein - as well as their philosophical figures as *daemon* -, under the auspice of Cavell's "The Availability of the Later Wittgenstein". This investigation would also be pursuant to my investigation of the *Charmides*, and the contrast between the two philosophers would be further illustrated by a small selection of poets. As to the Romantics, reading literature on Coleridge, namely Empson, gave me a will to produce further work on how Coleridge regarded inspiration, especially its impact on his ethical feelings toward poetry. This would mean an investigation into the concepts of shame, myth and belief in Coleridge's work, namely as to why he felt shame in altering certain poems so that seemed more 'inspired'. I would also like to discuss Keats' concept of 'Negative Capability' (Letter, 21 Dec. 1817) in connection to Socrates' allusions to the 'knowledge of ignorance' in the *Charmides*, and the imagination in general.

I have also found during my research that, although Stoicism is often taken as a shorthand example of passionless, Kantian duty, as MacIntyre and Nussbaum maintain, more extensive reading reveals much evidence against this reading. Above all, I have come to believe that reading the Stoa (and the function of their *procheiron*) in this manner essentially comes down to a misconception of a similar mode of reading, which is prayer. Placing the Stoa as the forefathers of moral rationalism, MacIntyre aligns them with Kant: 'To act virtuously is not, as Kant was later to think, to act against inclination; it is to act from inclination formed by the cultivation of the virtues.' James too makes this point, in contrast to religion.[3] Yet a defense of Stoicism lies precisely in MacIntyre's conclusion that 'moral education is an "education sentimentale"' (149) – and that any education requires some measure and form of discipline and training. Stoicism is the point in the history of philosophy where this question was most focused upon. But this would be meaningless to say if it did not participate in the joy required of religious feeling. The concepts of *boulesis* and especially *gaudium* (Seneca, "Letter to Lucilius", Ep. 23) are part of the proof against Nussbaum's arguments in TD that *ataraxia* is a method: like attention, a means *and* an end; but an end towards further means and ends, in the process of ongoing education. A further argument is her attempt to vindicate Medea's actions as an act of love (which I would like to contrast with Epictetus' arguments regarding this particular tragedy.)

This paves the way against Nussbaum's attack against detachment, in her praise of passion in TD and LK. In a nutshell, for there is a lot to say here, Nussbaum makes a parody of Aristotle's account by severely truncating Aristotle's account of moral perception. Although she calls it moral,

[3] 'It makes a tremendous emotional and practical difference to one whether one accept the universe in the drab discolored way of stoic resignation to necessity, or with the passionate happiness of Christian saints.' (VRE 41)

she is actually speaking of aesthetic perception, since her account completely neglects the element of training and discipline that provides attention with a grammar. A counterargument against Nussbaum's position would have given me a fuller contextualization in terms of discussing the universals-particulars dichotomy (Nussbaum's neglect of the meditative process is very patent in her misconstrual of the role of universals) – but would have inflated the number of pages beyond reasonable limits.

I would also have liked to investigate two important symbols of, respectively, attention and presence: light (in Weil, Aristotle, Wittgenstein, St. John of the Cross, William Blake and Heidegger) and the mountain (Weil, Coleridge, A.R. Ammons, Robert Frost, Heidegger, Hölderlin), which recurrently reappear in philosophy and poetry, providing a sense of the intertextuality existent between these two realms of thought. There are truly many ideas, and in particular certain symbols and mythologies in later Heidegger that I would truly have liked to explore here. I only discovered Heidegger rather late in the process, but he was nonetheless a crucial influence that made me review a number of arguments and restructure my thesis toward a genetic approach. I also only began to relate the concept of *isostheneia* to irony more recently towards the end, and would like to pursue investigation into the work of the Skeptics and namely Sextus Empiricus both in regards of irony and Weil's concept of grace.

## Philosophical Contextualization

### Universals and Particulars, Holism and *Logos*

Poems and prayers are reactions in the form of texts to the motivating problem of philosophy - the motive for language, and especially metaphor - which also grounds religion. That we are, in certain cases, forced to speak allegorically propels metaphysical thinking, which is a misunderstanding of language. Attention is the faculty posited as key to reading these special kinds of texts which purportedly provide insight into the very roots of thinking. In BT, Heidegger provides his perspective on the tradition of Western metaphysics and how it has misinterpreted the fundamental problem of the meaning of being, which is grammatically manifest in the following conundrum: 'when we ask, "what is 'being' ['Sein']?" we stand in an understanding of the "is" without being able to determine conceptually what the "is" means.' (H5) We use language on an everyday basis to describe our activities, and nevertheless we do not understand neither the nature of language nor existence. For Heidegger, these problems (or this single, fundamental problem) stand before all others. Heidegger's main criticism of the philosophical tradition is that of having derailed the ontological problem through an epistemological interpretation of *logos*, linked to an expectation of a *conceptual* determination, an explanation of the problem and not of the structure of the problem, thereby crafting a subject-object rift that might purportedly be bridged by propositional statements.

In the middle of the rift would stand some essential and substantial idea (the Platonic Forms), which *logos* is taken to represent and bridge. There is thus a tripartite scheme which also

organizes my dissertation, of attention to: ideas, self and beings. (Note the fourth, implied element, of attention, which implicitly and most importantly requires a fifth: language.) Stemming from Plato, the conception of Forms as *a priori* representations of the world evolved into Christian theology, where 'God' crystallized in capitalized singular noun form (a Being), depicting the logical form of the superlative. But a mode of perception of this Form was required, and this became *nous* as contemplative attention, the intuition of Forms.[4] This grammar of contemplative attention laid down the structure for the traditional model of poetic inspiration that peaked in Romanticism, with the poet as oracle, mediator of the ineffable. This way of thinking, which has been dubbed logocentrism, has pictured *logos* – the discourse of thinking – exclusively as *ratio*, whereby (calculative) reason is regarded as the proper method for establishing ends. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein was operating under this mode of *logos* as the proper way to represent (the structure of) the world as a (transcendental) limited whole.[5] For logical discourse to count as 'true', symbols (universal forms) must conform to logical rules of syntax.

Universal forms are essentially tokens, kinds of things, which as abstractions of particulars are taken as atemporal.[6] The noun is the grammatical archetype of universal forms. As the utmost universal idea, 'being' was posited as a supratemporal, transcendental concept. Whereas the Stoic tradition of attention to the self led to Kant's determination of the subject as the hub of experience, "'language" was the twentieth-century philosopher's substitute for "experience"' (Cf. Rorty, 340) Yet if the world is constrained by logic, then the question arises of what constrains logic.[7] In other words, truth would have to be transcendental, but this eschews verifiability, and thus epistemology slips from its foothold. This problem of self-referentiality that so shook Bertrand Russell revealed logic to be yet another transcendental belief, in a special mode of description that could explain or refer to everything.[8] At the heart of the issue lies the problem of the relationship between universals and particulars[9], whereby, respectively: 'type A entities, all unexplained explainers, are in the same situation as a transcendent Diety', and B, 'which require relations but cannot themselves relate, require contextualization and explanation but cannot themselves contextualize nor explain.' (Rorty 342) In short, universal ideas are taken to explain particulars, but cannot themselves be explained (are ineffable). Most essentially, the same is true of *logos* itself, our capacity for language; and evidently true of 'God'. Wittgenstein's rejection of the

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[4] 'Russell had tried to solve this problem ['how knowledge of what they called "logic" was possible'] by reinventing the Platonic Forms. He had postulated a realm of otherworldly logical objects and a faculty of intellectual intuition with which to grasp them. But Wittgenstein saw that this led to a new version of the "third man problem" which Plato had raised in the Parmenides - the problem of how the entities designed to explain knowledge are known.' (Rorty 341)

[5] Cf. (Rorty 337-8)

[6] "'Time has long served as the ontological – or rather ontic – criterion for naïvely distinguishing the different regions of being. "Temporal" beings (natural processes and historical events) are separated from "atemporal" beings (spatial and numerical relationships) . . . Further, a "gap" between "temporal" being and "supratemporal" eternal being is found, and the attempt is made to bridge the gap.' (H18)

[7] 'The young Wittgenstein saw, however, what Frege and the young Russell had not seen: that the search for nonempirical truth about the conditions of the possibility of describability raises the self-referential problem of its own possibility.' (Rorty 341)

[8] 'The problem was that logic seemed to be an exception to the conditions which it itself laid down. The propositions of logic were not truthfunctional combinations of elementary statements about the objects which make up the world. Yet "logic" seemed to tell us that only such combinations had meaning.' (341)

[9] 'Russell's logical objects, the Kantian categories, and the Platonic Forms were all supposed to make another set of objects - the empirical objects, the Kantian intuitions, or the Platonic material particulars - knowable, or describable. In each case, we are told, the latter objects need to be related by the former objects before they become available - before they may be experienced or described.' (341-2)

*Tractatus* signaled his departure from the metaphysical attempts of logical positivism to objectively describe *logos* under the guise of a scientific style of writing. Self-referentiality is the reason that the problem cannot be conceptually determined – why *logos* cannot only mean (operate *exclusively* within the paradigm of) *ratio* (*episteme*).

The distance between available particulars and inexplicable universals 'sets out starkly the contrast between atomism and holism - between the assumption that there can be entities which are what they are totally independent of all relations between them, and the assumption that all entities are merely nodes in a net of relations.' (Rorty 345) Holism is then the idea 'that there are no linguistic entities which are intrinsically relationless – none which, like the "simple names" of the *Tractatus*, are by nature *relata*.' (345) Under this view (shared by Wittgenstein in PI and Heidegger in BT) there is no objective view that can stand outside the world and grasp it as a whole: Dasein is the holistic term for the essential unity of self and world that always already is. Yet this holism, these philosophers imply, has been ruptured by ways of making philosophy (logocentrism), and accordingly, philosophy requires therapy; or properly said, counter-therapy.

Heidegger's fundamental ontology works within the structural framework of the logocentric tradition, but radically reinterprets its elements in accordance with his method of 'positive destruktion' (H23). Yet the major thinkers of the key epochs of the metaphysical tradition had also grappled with interpreting "being" (as always) by both working within their tradition and returning to the aporetic "wellsprings" of "being". *Logos* then, the pathway of thinking to 'being', not only lies within, but equiprimoridally constitutes the "hermeneutical circle". The major difference of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, which makes holism snap into place, is that Heidegger grounds beings in interrelation through in care. Heidegger does not do away with presence: he reinterprets the objectiveness of presence (stemming from some 'essential substance', physis) and establishes its manifestation as originating from the circumspect meaningfulness of care that brings beings 'near'. Here we find a sense of intimacy with the world. Since 'attention' is a relational skill (and therefore essentially meta-physical, since relational elements are strictly functional and not ostensive substances), it effectively serves as the thematic hub for the ontological problem. Moreover, the concept of care provides a non-rational bridge to link attention to particular beings, whilst casting a different light on the Stoic insistence on value as an ethical dimension inherent to Dasein's existence, which is also grounded in time (a teleological fate framed by death that signifies relative to an attention to *logos* - what kind of thing I am).

## Aesthetics and Ethics

When Paul de Man describes the post-structuralist return to theory as a "Return to Philology", he is talking of how the aesthetic power of poetry can have indirect cognitive effects, provided attention is paid to the use of language. Epictetus claimed that argumentation had moral effects, that interpretation can change character. De Man's claim establishes a prior event, that close reading, preceding 'any theory, is able to transform critical discourse . . . accomplishes this often in spite of itself because it cannot fail to respond to structures of language which it is the

more or less secret aim of literary teaching to keep hidden.' (24) This is the aesthetic version of Weil's transcendental model for attention, for whom the soul is transformed as the result of attention to the good.[10] This conforms to the Socratic belief that *logos* also encompasses the good, that reason is necessarily ethical. But whereas Weil's attention to words in prayer all lead to 'God' (is in this sense atomistic, one word that synthesizes and thus silences plurality), the literary texts de Man speaks of are of all sorts. What counts here is how the words are articulated, not that they mean within ethical constraints. What constrains poems is meaning, as discovered in case-by-case interpretation.

For de Man, a close reading of texts that value (care for) how language is used - before deciding 'what it means', i.e. without conforming a text to preconceived ideas - changes how one thinks. This transformation (*metanoia*) falls under the picture of 'inspiration' (attention as a path to 'truth') but in this case moral character is not necessarily affected: taste (critical assessment of forms of discourse) is. For Weil, an unorthodox believer (a model of the mystic as the individual believer), there is no essential difference (as manifestations - in words or acts - of 'God') between the absolute values of beauty or goodness; but for de Man that is precisely the unsettled problem[11] that lies veiled in the idle talk of literary theory: if and to what extent ethics overlaps with aesthetics. This problem becomes thinkable in the comparison of poems and prayers. In spite of the 'taken-for-granted assumptions which the profession of literature has been operating' – that literature has an underlying ethical (or 'humanizing') function -, 'convictions about the aims of literature' are not an established issue. A striking example of this (Kantian) 'admirable ambition to unite cognition, desire and morality in one single synthetic judgment' (de Man 25) is Nussbaum's project in *Love's Knowledge*[12] - to hail the novel (of Henry James) as the exemplary vehicle for moral knowledge, anchored in Aristotle's theory of perception.

Yet this ethical ambition may be partly recognized as a reaction to the holistic power of the metaphor, which can go as far as fusing opposite elements into a single, holistic form (Pseudo-Longinus and I.A. Richards). Richards reads the unifying ability of the metaphor into the larger unit of the tragedy, 'perhaps the most general, all-accepting, all-ordering experience known' (231), whose 'equilibrium of opposed impulses . . . brings into play far more of our personality'. (235) In this example, aesthetic perception extends to the ethical, and the metaphor can produce effects in terms of ordering the impulses of the self. Belief in literature as an exemplary form of humanism, of what is essential 'in' the human being (the 'true self'), and therefore a stance toward a dividing line or a justification for this conflation between aesthetics and ethics is the long-lasting quandary of the discipline. Yet like Heidegger in regards to ontology, de Man does not believe a final answer has been (or perhaps will be) achieved – what is clear is that the *problem* cannot be veiled: the teaching of literature 'ought to take place under the aegis of this question.' (125) This means an attention to words before theory has set in; but also an attention to the self, keeping our own

[10] 'If we turn our minds toward the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted thereto in spite of itself.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 117)

[11] 'Literary theory raises the unavoidable question whether aesthetic values can be compatible with the linguistic structures that make up the entities from which these values are derived.' (de Man 25)

[12] 'For the Greeks of the fifth and early fourth centuries B.C. . . . dramatic poetry and what we now call philosophical inquiry in ethics were both typically framed by, seen as ways of pursuing, a single and general question: namely, how human beings should live.' (Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge: Essays On Philosophy and Literature 15)

judgments under close scrutiny: 'away from standards of cultural excellence that, in final analysis, are always based on some form of religious faith, to a principle of disbelief that is not so much scientific as critical' (126) What seems to linger is a belief that attention to the powerful effects of intentional language will change how we think, and that therefore we need to heed our judgments.[13] But this is the Stoic theory of impressions in a nutshell, without the moral dimension, i.e. without a concern for what follows reading, as a result of it. My belief is that sometimes nothing happens, sometimes it does; but when it does whatever changes is not in the world, but in our beliefs toward it.

Nothing necessitates a moral role for literature. The word 'ethical', however, more comprehensive in scope, requires special care. Artists may have an ethical posture toward their art: a seriousness, a dedicated attention to the pursuit of mastering a language which can, as a form of discourse, more properly talk about (among all other things) the ontological condition of being-in-the-world. The *question* of the 'true self' thus surges as a poetic voice. Although de Man claims that close reading of literary texts improves our normative judgment (and thus transforms us), this assertion is restricted to the domain of literature. Yet de Man does not negate that what may be learned in critical thinking may transpire to other domains. What he advocates is that there are priorities: perception should precede theory (Wittgenstein's 'just look!'), and to that purpose theory must subjected to skeptical thinking, the deconstruction of *a priori* frames of reading. Words may have an impact on belief or not: but first this to be a possibility in the first place, attention is the monitoring of thinking itself (what the Stoics called 'the directing mind'), as a depuration of perception, for certain modes of thinking distract our perception of what is the case. As a *trained* skill, attention is both a means and an end in itself. We need to practice reading, and in so doing, we get better at thinking in general because our understanding evolves. This is because reading, namely literature and especially poetry, is problematic.

Heidegger's interest in poetic discourse as the primitive means of disclosure of the being of beings combines *legein* and *noien* into the primordial being of *logos*. This word's potential for food-for-thought lies in the self-reflexive fact that to think *logos* is to think thinking. Its dense ambiguity - that plural meanings can fit into a single word – shows that the word is, to all effects, a metaphor. That words can contain multiple ideas, various possibilities of use, is what confers poetic language its power in relation to thinking. This reflects the same grammatical structure as the problem of the meaning of 'being' (which is 'the being' of 'beings'). The very form of the gerund,[14] as Heidegger philologically notes, is a reunion of noun (a oneness) and verb (change), which reflects the temporal tension between how words seem to stop in time (Forms as 'eternal' objects for mimetic use as made available through writing and the presence of the present, *ousia*) and how meanings change in time, i.e. in relation to our understanding, and even in languages themselves. Metaphors call on us to meditate and listen to their meanings so that we may discern and interpret their covert plural meanings in order then to speak them, use them in further discourse (which stands 'outside

[13] 'Attention to the philological or rhetorical devices of language is not the same as aesthetic appreciation, although the latter can be a way of access to the former. Perhaps the most difficult thing for students and teachers of literature to realize is that their appreciation is measured by the analytical rigor of their own discourse about literature, a criterion that is not primarily or exclusively aesthetic.' (124)

[14] 'Our questioning can arrive at what is called thinking only if we pay heed to . . . the duality of what the *one* word, the participle of participles, the word *eon* designates: what is present in presence.' (Heidegger WCT 243)

time' because it 'exists' only as ideas). This, however, shows that analogical thinking is fundamentally inconclusive: it lives in the mode of recursive talking, a shifting between the interplay of words *(mythos)*. To Wittgenstein, for one, there is wisdom in knowing when to stop talking, evoking the boundary between poetry and prayer, prayer being akin to the listening, reticent silence of understanding *(noesis)*. Heidegger's revisiting of *logos* in early Greek thinking, however, is an attempt to ground in poetry both listening and speaking as the unitary perception of being. This equiprimordial relation connects to the key themes in the *Charmides* of knowledge of knowledge and of ignorance: knowledge of ignorance covering the attentional aspects of humility, decreation and *sophrosyne* that conform the spiritual tradition, returning us to the boundaries of poetry and prayer and the *fundamental contradictory relation* between common sense (positive concretion of logocentric thinking) and skepticism (negative knowledge of ignorance) as a criterion for authentic thinking. The opposition of propositional thought (*ratio*, which aims to be conclusive, arriving at a conclusively synthetic answer in the mode of Hegelian dialectics) and analogical thought (which groundlessly shifts between aspects) is the analogue in the philosophical system to the formal structure of the metaphor. That Weil upholds contradiction[15] as the condition for contemplative attention and grace is an instant reminder that primitive religious thought also stems from the genetic duplicity of *esse*, 'being' (when, moreover, *logos* also still meant *mythos*).

The synthetic power of the metaphor is evoked in Heidegger's claim that the unitary source of the *transcendens* 'being' is the same as that of allegory, and that this precedes an idea of universals as general and abstract ideas.[16] This suffices to explain the (only) way in which the *absolute use* (Cf. Wittgenstein's LE) of universals can signify; and finds a parallel echo in de Man, who says that close reading is 'an examination of the structure of language prior to the meaning it produces.' (24) This examination of *logos*, i.e. of language *itself* is what takes us back, genetically, to the elusively tight relations between poetry and thought. Post-structuralism is in this sense a return to *logos*' meaning of *mythos*, a reminder that allegory is a primordial mode of discourse. This idea is joined by a conception of language not only as a holistic structure, in Heidegger (followed by Derrida), but of *logos* as an animated being. *Logos* reveals itself in discourse: here we can see how mystical thought is a different kind of discourse, which essentially *extols* this phenomenon. This, however, is also a metaphoric depiction – *logos* is not to be understood as an entity or property (herein lies the danger of magical thought, of superstition); the point is that discourse is a particular *way of being*. (The importance of an attention to words is patent in the fact that the word 'being' itself may trick us.)[17] This step back into an original[18] mode of speech that is ontologically revealing is inevitably allegorical: it has the same philosophical motivations as religion, with the major difference that religion is centered on assent and belief (the desire, the *telos*, the what-for) and not

[15] 'Contradiction is the criterion. We cannot by suggestion obtain things which are incompatible. Only grace can do that.' (99)
[16] 'The "universality" of being "*surpasses"* the universality of genus. According to the designation of medieval ontology, "being" is a *transcendens*. Aristotle himself understood the unity of this transcendental "universal", as opposed to the manifold of the highest generic concepts with material content, as the *unity of analogy*.' (H3)
[17] Thus something as simple the translator's choice to retreat from the capitalization of 'Being' [*Sein*] in Heidegger can depict an entirely new meaning. 'Capitalizing "being", although it has the dubious merit of treating "being" as something unique, risks implying that it is some kind of Super Thing or transcendent being. But Heidegger's use of the word "being" in no sense refers the word to something like *a* being, especially not a transcendent Being. Heidegger does not want to substantivize this word . . . later words for being, *Ereignis* ["appropriation," "belonging-together"] and *Das Geviert* ["the Fourfold"] express *relations* that first constitute any possible *relata* or things, and thus confirm this nonsubstantializing intention.' (Stambaugh xxiv)
[18] In my dissertation, this word shall generally mean both origin in time and creation.

the form of expression itself (*how* language is used and its immediate effects). Both impulses combined report to an initial combination of *logos* and *mythos*.

## Style in Philosophy

The post-structuralist separation of aesthetics and ethics translates into an inclusion of aesthetic (in the modern sense of artistic, properly said stylistic) elements in philosophical writing and an attitude of poetic attention as attention to *logos* (the being of language). When Rorty compares the thinking of Heidegger and Wittgenstein[19], although he is essentially criticizing later Heidegger for a 'failure of philosophical nerve' which led him to revert to Tractarian atomism, what is mostly at stake is an irritation with the seeping of metaphor into philosophical discourse, a question of styles of thinking. In BT, Heidegger's notion of philosophical counter-therapy, similar to Wittgenstein's in PI, is, as I have indicated, that of cleansing philosophy of its own 'therapeutic need' to bridge the gap it has invented between subject and object by covering it up with belief in theoretical and mythological pictures. Everything is already alright: the problem is philosophy. This family of thought intends to return to the things themselves, an observation of what happens in the world prior to allowing thinking to impress explanatory pictures into our observation. It thus firstly tries to take a step back from intuition - where 'seeing' already is an interpretation - to sense perception ('Just look!'). As the Stoics advert, value judgments meddle between the eye and the thing.

But later Heidegger retreats from clearer argumentation as explanation to include poetic discourse,[20] which is increasingly investigated (and assimilated) as the authentic mode of accessing the problematic of "being". Rorty's critique regarding later Heidegger's return to (Kantian) *a priori* conditions of possibility as 'mystical' (which Heidegger had eschewed in BT precisely because atemporal) has, however, to contend with the idea that allegory, as pursued in the work of Vico, is also historically genetic, the primitive mode of expressive speech where perception and intuition are combined in mythological discourse. This historical sense of the *a priori* brings a different sense of facticity to later Heidegger's endeavor: the transcendental idea of essence here becomes a historically grounded, primordial mode of thinking, of both perception and discourse. The problem for philosophical description is that this historicity expresses itself as *mythos*, an analogical mode of discourse that lies in the conception of *logos* prior to the Platonic separation of *mythos* from *logos*,[21] which incidentally marks the separation between literature and philosophy.

Yet Rorty's point can only regard the question of later Heidegger's discourse: the goal of BT was always that of pursuing the meaning of being and its mode of inquiry[22]: speaking mostly

[19] (Rorty)
[20] 'the older Heidegger retreated from sentences and discourse to single words - words which had to be abandoned as soon as they ceased to be hints *(Winke)* and became signs *(Zeichen),* as soon as they entered into relations with other words and thus became tools for accomplishing purposes.' (339)
[21] Cf. (Derrida, Dissemination 86; 168)
[22] 'Thus to work out the question of being means to make a being – one who questions – transparent in its being . . . Dasein.' (H7)

'philosophically', BT stopped short of its annunciated ending – after having laid down Dasein and the empirically shared world of the PI -, and then Heidegger *had to* move on, trying to focus on the ontological problem *as* born within aporetic thinking. This becomes clear in "What is Called Thinking", where Heidegger attempts to revise the meaning of *logos*. The motive for this is to destroy Wittgenstein's ineffability as a place to stop questioning. This is what is at stake: the difference between reticent silence and utterance; oracular utterance to be precise *because* its goal is to speak *esse*. 'Commonly an inquiry aims straight for the answer . . . By the answer, we rid ourselves of the question. The question, "What is called thinking?" is of a different kind . . . one thing only matters with this question: to make the question problematic.' (158) It is in this particular sense that the sort of thinking Heidegger calls for is poetic. Where Wittgenstein claims philosophy must stop is where Heidegger says we must start thinking. Moreover, Wittgenstein's overall effort goes in this sense of the Stoics' therapeutic attention against impressions, 'distractions' here being 'theoretical thoughts' as they cover up phenomena. Heidegger shares this concern. But whereas Wittgenstein is concerned with revealing the covert grammar underpinning theoretical pictures, Heidegger also uses this method – which replaces the notion of a transcendental ineffable essence with conventional practices guided by rules - but wants to delve deeper into the origin of language itself, placing his thought before grammatical distinctions.[23] So the tension is between the whole and its analysis, i.e. universals and particulars.

This is particularly evident in his treatment of the Platonic interpretation of *methexis* (participation) in WCT. Grammar is just the visible, logical designation of the *a priori* ontological duality (Derrida's *pharmakon*) contained within the singular form of the *transcendens*.[24] It is this self-referential duality[25] that ultimately grounds reality through its equiprimordial meanings. The problem is that each meaning of the duality covers the other one up[26]: and this is a condition of the faculty of attention, for we only grasp one idea or meaning at once (in Wittgenstein's ambiguous picture either the duck or the rabbit), because in understanding we see-*as*. This ability comes from *logos*. Yet to imagine losing understanding (*noesis,* 'seeing') and to only sense-see (*aisthesis*) a duck-rabbit, would be to go before language (which we cannot unlearn). Poetic language takes us to that place of wonder, perplexity and ignorance by confronting us with unexpected uses of words, whereby these and their semantic relations are to be found anew. To understand a new poem is to learn a new language that however consists of words common to the world, those we already know or can learn by asking others or looking them up in dictionaries. So poems mimic our initial problem of 'being' by making us stand before language as the world stands before us.[27] An analogical effort is required for establishing new relations, new uses of the same things.

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[23] 'Participles take part in both the nominal and the verbal meaning . . . That classification is correct, of course, if we are content with grammar' (WCT 220), and then traces the translations of "participle" from the Roman and Greek grammarians to its conceptual origin in the Sophist: 'Thus, our current distinction between nouns and . . . verbs does not arise from grammar.' (222)

[24] 'The participle in which all the rest have their roots . . . speaks from a unique and therefore distinctive duality.' (221)

[25] 'the essential point is not that there are only two meanings, instead of three or four, but that the two meanings refer to each other. Each of the two meanings is one of the pair.' (220)

[26] 'When the word is used in its nominal meaning, "something blossoming," it is no longer specifically stated that this something is, of course, a being; and no more does the word "to be" find expression when the word "blossoming" is used as a verb.' (221)

[27] 'Let us imagine in thought once again and once more that this inconspicuous little "is" could not be thought. What would become of our stay in the world, if this firm and constantly affirmed "is" were denied us? (225)

To Heidegger, the world is always already related in care. Ideas do not participate in beings by referring to them from a distance between words and beings; we participate (*methexis*) with innerworldly beings that already show forth their meaning within a totality of relevance, and so Heidegger, in the way of the ancient Greeks, calls beings "that which comes forth" (*aletheia*) instead of "objects" (which as a term feeds on the *a priori* idea that we are separated from the world). Things come forth (we become closer to being-in-the-world) as they become ready-to-hand, i.e. as we heed to them in care. (Ch.1) So Heidegger turns *methexis* on its head: what separates us from the world, after all, are ideas and the presupposition that they participate in things by reference. Positing a duality as existing between (universal) ideas and (particular) things was Plato's invention of meta-physics and thence supratemporal transcendence.[28] But Heidegger works within the world, within the cave, precisely by focusing on the ontological duality.[29] Attention to beings becomes 'actual' (Aristotle) in the ancient sense of participation, when we understand "being" as a particular being-as, not as the objective presence of a being or of Being as in a separate "place".[30] By pointing out a mountain we do not provide an answer to the "is", we just cover up 'precisely what is still in question. For we do not, after all, inquire about a being as mountain . . . as though we wanted to climb a mountain'. (PMD 225) Participation here is the climbing, the (relational) event of my being-with (climbing) a being (a mountain). It is a doing. (But it can also be a making, namely through *writing*.)

This participation in the being of beings means an effort, a regression into the early Greek mode of thinking, which is the mystical gathering of the presence of being in beings. Here presence is the equivalent to BT's ecstatic Moment (which also shares in the ancient metaphor of light for attention (Ch.3, cf. DA III.5) as a making-present): 'the entry into duration of unconcealment. The Greeks experience such duration as a luminous appearance in the sense of illumined, radiant self-manifestation.' (237) This participation of idea and form is foremost a gathering, a nearness as explained through handiness. This closeness to things is the being-with innerworldly beings that is being-in-the-world. But this original sense of participation whereby the animistic mode of being talks to us in beings, does not, in thinking, hide the original duality.[31] Yet the realization of this duality that opens up the abyss also opens up the terrible desire for synthesis: the philosopher craving to have it both ways: to understand in silence and to explain being. What comes closest are the mythological possibilities of poetry, which grounds by expressing being. The opposition Rorty claims exist between later Wittgenstein and later Heidegger should thus pertain more to the question of whether ground precedes groundlessness (Wittgenstein's goal in OC) or the other way round (WCT). Notwithstanding, early Heidegger's point was that we are always already thrown into the world (the ground is there); but philosophy is the posterior thinking of

[28] 'Western-European thinking . . . proceeds from beings to Being. Thinking ascends from the former to the latter.' (222)
[29] 'In keeping with the guiding question, thinking transcends the particular being, in the direction of its Being, not in order to leave behind and abandon the particular being, but so that by this ascent, by this transcendence, it may represent the particular being in that which it, *as* a being, is.' (222-3)
[30] Plato created the metaphysical "dimension" not only by introducing a rift in time (supratemporality) but also space: 'An interpretation decisive for Western thought is that given by Plato. He says that between beings and Being there prevails . . . the *locus*, the site, the place . . . Particular beings and Being are differently located.' (227)
[31] Let us note well – *eon emmenai*, the presence of what is present, and not what is present as such and not Being as such, nor both added together in a synthesis, but: their duality, emerging from their unity kept hidden, keeps the call.' (242)

'being' that throws us, in anxiety, into the abyss with *logos*. Poetry *marks* the spot of the *transcendens* with the *legein* of "X"[32], prayer lays down ground with the allegorical explanation of "God".

In BT Heidegger had abstracted God from the meaning of *esse*: his fundamental ontology is not theology because it is not createdness he wishes to discuss. His investigation of *esse* may be an effect of createdness (as all things are), but what is distinctive about his method is that he focuses on *logos* as a questioning. Thus after BT his investigation veers to the meaning of *logos* as a means to the being of beings. In short, his mysticism of *esse* proves fruitful for my purposes because it needs to traverse *logos* – and for him that meant designating poetry as the ontological mode of thinking. Thinking of the *esse* of things is thinking about 'this gratuitousness of things' – not what things are, but that they are.[33] This way of seeing is not only radically different from scientific thought, it is also different from a sense of the sublime in nature, if it be hinged in a wonder at the enormous plurality of mechanical causes.[34] Perceiving the *esse* of things is a special way of looking at things, namely as created, 'so that all talk of God has its foundation in the *esse* of creatures.' (God Still Matters 22) Contemplative attention thus lies at the heart of monotheism, which is first and foremost mystic since it is built around the fundamental mystery of our existence.[35]

'God' grammatically delineates what Dasein is negatively in terms of its non-existence but positively in terms of idea – i.e. its ideal potentiality in terms of what can be thought: *logos*. It is because the concept of God or *esse* (the axioms of existence itself) only exists in and through allegorical language, that the meaning of the being of Dasein is to be found in *logos*. What for the Stoics is an accepted axiom (that *logos* is the root of our cosmic conscience) for Heidegger sets the drive and goal, the direction of inquisitive thinking. But Heidegger does not ask as science does, seeking answers to questions regarding the material relations between natural causes and the transformations they effect. Heidegger asks as Loyola does, knowing that conscience (Stoic *logos*) speaks in reticent silence. 'God, on the other hand, would provide the answer to the question: Why is there anything at all rather than nothing? . . . I say that God would provide the answer . . . because, since we do not know what God is, we do not have an answer to that question.' (God Still Matters 19) *Esse* is the ultimate universal, which means that grammatically there can be no object because the logical form is interrogative.[36] 'God' symbolizes a question we cannot answer, yet is a question that defines us. 'To say it is not a silly question but a real one is to say there is an answer although we do not know what it is. This is to say that God exists.' (McCabe 56) Hence it follows that the only possible approach of the concept is through a negative method.37 Heidegger's quest

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[32] "The Motive for Metaphor", Wallace Stevens

[33] "'Wonder is, however, not part of the vocabulary of science, any more than is "existence" or "God" or, indeed "science". But there remains the wonder that there is science at all, that there is a world of powers and action and new existents. This is not itself one of the wonders of science, and however fascinating the work of physicists investigating the Big Bang it is not relevant to this mystery of gratuitousness, the createdness, the *esse* of things.' (21)

[34] 'God cannot exist in the way that parts of the universe exist. He could not be an item in the universe. God has to be why there is a universe at all.' (God Still Matters 56)

[35] 'This, you might say, was the great Hebrew discovery: human beings are such that they worship *only* the mystery by which there is anything at all instead of nothing. To worship anything *in* the universe is to be dehumanized.' (God Still Matters 56)

[36] 'We use the word God to point us toward a darkness . . . a mystery that is revealed by our inability to answer the question. The question takes a fair number of forms, but as a sample it can be "What is it all for?", "What is the meaning of the whole shebang?", "How come there is anything at all instead of there not being anything at all?" (55)

[37] 'Although we have no notion of what God is, we can, I think, be pretty confident about the kind of thing God is *not* because she *could not* be. This is because we use the word "God" as a label for something we do not know, for the answer to a question we ask but cannot answer.' (55)

for the meaning of *esse* bears this same logic of mysticism: an abstraction of the element of created existence from the ontological problem. Yet there is a crucial difference: what for the Stoics was accepted as a venerable axiom, for Heidegger becomes the source of mystery: *logos*.

Heidegger goes back to poetry because he understands participation not only as the linguistic encounter of ideas and things (which are already fused), but as an expression, a celebration of existence (the religious "Yes!" of W. James).[38] Understood as an expression of primordial wonder, the grammar of universals can finally be regarded as a foregrounding of superlative value, of the significance itself of the existential mystery that frames the thinking of life. Universals are merely a conceptual space for the sacredness of what thinking originally was: awe of the world as expressed in language. Poetry is the *legein* of exultation and *noein* the heeding. The being of beings 'directs that which constitutes the fundamental character of thinking – the *legein* and *noien* – into its own nature. What so directs calls on us to think.' (WCT 231) The formula of the oracular is summarized in the claim that *legein* translates what *noien* hears.[39] It hears the calling, that which gives food for thought and as such keeps thought alive. In this to-and-fro between desiring and analogically-naming ground,[40] and redoing and crossing out the name ("Beyng"), there is, as Cavell indicates, a finding, a losing, a founding, and again, in time. This gift is what must be thanked for, recalled, remembered.[41] To do-and-make so is the prayer of poetry.[42]

Not all poems 'take thinking to heart'. There are all sorts of poems, as there are all sorts of activities. Limericks and tongue-twisters are fun and musical, some poems are plainly dull; others serious yet musical. Seriousness in poems can signify two kinds of attitude: of the aesthetic kind, concerned with the fine choice of words; and of the ethical: seriousness, i.e. James' and Heidegger's solemnity toward the relation of ideas to life-as-a-whole, and constitutes the mark of what Aristotle called philosophical wisdom. The kind of poems I mostly have in mind for considerations of poetic attention are those that seriously combine both: words that make music and meanings that bear care-ful thinking.

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[38] This notion of celebration is also set within the Nietzschean opposition between the Apollinian and the Dyonisian impulses, where the *pharmakon* will play a crucial role: 'Speaking generally, our moral and practical attitude, at any given time, is always a resultant of two sets of forces within us, impulses pushing us one way and obstructions and inhibitions holding us back. "Yes! yes!" say the impulses; "No! no!" say the inhibitions. Few people who have not expressly reflected on the matter realize how constantly this factor of inhibition is upon us, how it contains and moulds us by its restrictive pressure almost as if we were fluids pent within the cavity of a jar.' (VRE 261) One of James' examples is of Walt Whitman, who 'owes his importance in literature to the systematic expulsion from his writings of all contractile elements. The only elements he allowed himself to express were of the expansive order . . . vicariously for all men . . . persuading the reader that men and women, life and death, and all things are divinely good . . . the restorer of the eternal natural religion. . . "pagan".' (VRE 85)

[39] 'The effort to make an adequate translation of the final words of the saying, the attempt to hear what is expressed in the Greek words *eon emmenai*, is nothing less than the attempt to take to heart That which calls on us to think.' (231)

[40] '. . . ventures of thought which, like mine, look as though they were lawless caprice'. (186)

[41] 'Thinking is thinking only when it *recalls* in thought the *eon'*. (244)

[42] The closing line of WTC: 'Can thinking give this gift into its hands, that is, take it to heart, in order to entrust it in *legein*, in the telling statement, to the original speech of language?*'* (244)

## Prologue

Attention is a pivotal concept for the dispelling of traditional logocentric dichotomies such as those set up between universal and particulars, or the Cartesian duality between mind and body. Yet attention firstly means perception, for attending *to* something means perceiving something. The inclusion of perception as the relational hub between (our) ideas (that are 'here') and (other) things (that are 'there') which makes for a holistic picture mandates, however, the inclusion of language. Language is the pertinent matter of mind – not neurons.[43] When we think about aesthetic puzzles we are not explaining causes but justifying why the thing produces such an effect: this is brought out by comparison with other language uses.[44] As such, poetry, the most sophisticated use of the materials of written language – words – is in turn highly relevant for the furthering of 'mind' (i.e. education). But words only truly affect the 'mind' if I am implicated, participate in them: if I give them my attention, which means making them mean. Poems, in their recourse to ambiguity, are particularly suited to such an active exercise of the attention. There is thus active and passive attention: sometimes we must operate on what we are perceiving, try to thoughtfully discern what is going on (namely when we are unsure whether we are perceiving it well), sometimes we must simply be receptive to what is being shown, without trying to ascertain anything. If I see a shadow in a corner, I will turn to find out who it is; if I see my friend before me in broad daylight I will greet him.

In a certain sense, music makes for the latter case. Music shows everything forth: as pure form I need not interpret anything, just delight in it or hate it. In this basic sense, music does not mean: it is a being. Emotions and attitudes come to me from over there, and can take me over like a drug. I either participate or do not, listen or turn it off; and the point is that to really listen is to *become* that form. Songs, contrasted to instrumental music, are more similar to poems, in their mixing of words with music; and yet there is a crucial difference: *someone* sings these words, therefore conveying, *manifestly* expressing an attitude. Poems are also strange mix of both music and words, but are more governed by the latter ingredient. Poems are a mixture of nonsense and sense. The nonsensical element is music, whereas the meanings of words indicate sense; and these elements form an interplay, offering themselves for the reader to pull both into a balanced shape. Yet *written* words do not come to me as in songs. In poems everything is merely *suggested*: there is no emotion on paper because there is *no one* there, only shadows on white: *I* must *speak* the words, make them mean. So in this case - of reading – if I am willing to participate in the game, I am to listen, think, and then speak those words, mean them, if I am to become like it. Music just requires that I open up, poems require this and interpretation. Inspiration and contemplation are fine as pictures, provided we understand all the work that precedes them – and the kind of work it is.

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[43] 'Supposing it was found that all our judgments proceeded from our brain. We discovered particular kinds of mechanism in the brain, formulated general laws, etc.' This is our situation today, with the development of technology and advances in neurology. But the 'question is whether this is the sort of explanation we should like to have when we are puzzled about aesthetic impressions, e.g. there is a puzzle – "Why do these bars give me such a peculiar impression?" Obviously it isn't this, i.e. a calculation, an account of reactions, etc., we want – apart from the obvious impossibility of the thing.' (LC 20)

[44] 'As far as one can see the puzzlement I am talking about can be cured only by peculiar kinds of comparisons, e.g. by an arrangement of certain musical figures, comparing their effect on us. "If we put in this chord it does not have that effect; if we put in this chord it does."' (LC 20)

# Chapter 1 – Attention & Therapy

## Simone Weil and Attention

> "That action is good which we are able to accomplish while keeping our attention and intention totally directed toward pure and impossible goodness, without veiling from ourselves by any falsehood either the attraction or the impossibility of pure goodness. In this way virtue is entirely analogous to artistic inspiration. The beautiful poem is the one which is composed while the attention is kept directed toward inexpressible inspiration, in so far as it is inexpressible." (Weil, Gravity and Grace 97)
>
> 'Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer.' (117)

Attention is a key element in Simone Weil's method of contact with God, which is prayer. Yet attention is set within a picture of ineffable inspiration where poetry and prayer are seen as sharing an intimate family relationship.[45] The first quotation also extends this bond between art and religion to ethics. For Weil, in short, the mystical inspiration of both good actions and good poems is made possible by directing our attention toward the inexpressible. The way in which Weil claims poetry and prayer are related is problematic for poetry, for what connects the two uses of language is ineffability - the very failure to produce language -, thus bedding poetry in paradox: inspiration is inexpressible expression. Grace, on the other hand - the religious model of inspiration - need not produce words per se but may also be expressed, in action. In religion, the picture of inspiration, associated to the mystical and primitive traditions of poetry and prayer, crystallized in theology in the discipline of contemplation, of Platonic origin. In Stoicism and then Christianity, contemplation also becomes a form of therapy, whereby prayer becomes a means for spiritual purification. Given the common roots of poetry and prayer, we shall have to investigate how the idea of contemplative attention as a means of spiritual therapy affects conceptions of poetry.

## Philosophy as therapy

Weil's concept of attention is tied to an age-old tradition of thinking, intimately related to the ancient practice of philosophy. According to Pierre Hadot, the main goal of ancient philosophers is quite clear – to learn how to live happily and in accordance to reason, having wisdom as the 'transcendent norm which guided their action.' (Way of Life 265). Action was indeed the criterion, the public test of thinking. But this is not what comes to mind when we think of philosophy today. Pierre Hadot argues how although philosophy has mostly become a technical language for specialists it was, in Antiquity, essentially viewed as a way of life, an attitude, a stance of a sort of man who seeks wisdom as a way of life. Knowing one can never be absolutely wise, we must evidence ourselves above all by our attitudes and actions: words and theories are regarded as

[45] 'Extreme attention is what constitutes the creative faculty in man and the only extreme attention is religious.' (117)

secondary. This ethical stance manifests itself as a battle against the lure of pictures and words, and namely poetry in the Ancient Quarrel.[46]

This wariness of words certainly influenced the Early Christian desert monks. Saint Antony succinctly stated the case between aesthetic and ethical stances when he was visited by the like of Greek philosophers, who thought 'they would subject him to ridicule because he had not learned letters. To them Antony said: "What do you say? Which is first – mind or letters? And which is the cause of the which – the mind of the letters, or the letters of the mind?" After their reply that the mind is first, and an inventor of the letters, Antony said: "Now you see that in the person whose mind is sound there is no need for the letters."' (Athanasius 64) This summarizes the ethical position, whereby a healthy mind is placed in opposition to rhetoric. This had already become a strong trait of Stoicism: Epictetus disliked it if his students manifested vain verbosity: 'you'll pride yourself on being fluent in the dialogue form. Don't do it, man. What I would rather hear from you is, "Look how I don't fail in my desires, or have experiences I don't want. I'll prove it to you in case of death, I'll prove it to you in case of prison" . . . That's the real test of a youth fit to finish school.' (Discourses 2,1,34). Stoic moral character is thus symbolized by 'sound mind', which the will must fight for.

But this wariness against charming words has not altogether vanished from philosophy. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein also calls our attention to the delusive power of words by saying that 'Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.' (109). Although the object of their irritation is different – Epictetus is worried with how practices do not follow from stated principles (is scolding a person for believing he is of a sort, a philosopher, just by saying the right words) and Wittgenstein about an erroneous picture of language -, both are insisting on how the power of words can sidetrack our attention from what is really going on. This in turn summarizes the realist position, whereby the issue is not that of constructing the right set of knowledge to match the world's logical structure,[47] but to learn to see (and be in) the world (which is always real and right) as what it is.[48] The realist position is directly tied to the ethical because from this point of view what we need to do is change ourselves, not the world.[49] This is one of the elements of regarding philosophy as therapy; but there is a further thought, namely that which justifies contemplation: that if the world is always already right, then it is our thinking (and speaking) of it that goes wrong.[50]

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[46] Nussbaum's sets up Plato's expulsion of the poets from the Republic as a battle between morality of Stoic persuasion and an openness to wonder. 'In Republic II-III and X, Plato puts this view [- 'that the person who aims to live a godlike life, transcending his or her humanity, must do away' with passions -] to work in his proposal for the education of the young, with the notorious result that all of conventional poetry – Homer and tragedy above all - must be eliminated.' (LK 387) This is, in her own example, 'Questionable with very good reason: for the novel acknowledges a wonder before worldly sensous particulars that Mrs. Newsome would neither feel or approve; and they attach a dangerous importance to outcomes that lie beyond the control of the moral will.' (LK 184) To these sensuous particulars Nussbaum opposes (and attacks) the ideal detachment of universals.

[47] 'The world is the totality of facts, not of things.' (Wittgenstein TLP §1.1)

[48] 'For real wisdom does not merely cause us to know: it makes us "be" in a different way.' (Way of Life 265)

[49] 'The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy.' (Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus 6.43)

[50] 'Necessity is essentially a stranger to the imaginary.' (Weil 53)

There is still another key thought in this regard: 'First and foremost, philosophy presented itself as a therapeutic, intended to cure mankind's anguish.'[51] (Hadot PWL 265-6) Philosophical discourse was regarded as a way of not only curing a sense of existential anxiety, but also of tempering the self with virtues that may shield it from harm's way, i.e. from distancing itself from reality. In short, philosophy was the attempt to help the mind become sound. This is probably, in our eyes, an uncommon notion of philosophy; at its base lies the notion that certain souls are sick and in need of treatment. But this is precisely what certain thinkers affirm. 'Friends, the school of a philosopher is a hospital. When you leave, you should have suffered, not enjoyed yourself', Epictetus told his students. (3,23,30) The role of Wittgenstein's philosopher is also that of the physician: 'The philosopher treats a question; like an illness' (Investigations I, 255) Yet if we pursue the threads of these individual statements, we realize they bear different implications: Epictetus calls for a therapy of suffering, in the line of religious doctrine; but for Wittgenstein, the traditional figure of the philosopher and the way he pursues thinking (as he himself did in the *Tractatus*) is precisely what must be questioned.[52] Epictetus proposes philosophy as therapy (Ch.2); Wittgenstein will propose a counter-therapy: the therapy of philosophy itself. Whereas the former regards thinking as a means to soundness, the latter sees the history and the matter of thinking itself as built upon a mythology of essences[53], whereby the end of philosophy is to stop thinking philosophically.

## Logotherapy

Philosophy as a form of therapy is based on a notion of restoring souls to good health. This in turn requires a link between a notion of health and a form of language. In *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, Pedro Laín Entralgo explores this connection as established in ancient Greece. In the Prologue, Laín begins by telling us how medicine was regarded by certain Greek physicians. Vegetius, for example, in the Mulomedicina, claims that 'Animals and men must not be treated with vain words but by the sure art of medicine'[54] In this view, the body is to be treated as an entity whose mechanics are separate and impervious to language: scientific materialism rises in opposition to (magical) discourse. Physicians attempting to cure by the word were, as Soranus is quoted to have said, charlatans: 'They boast foolishly and vainly who believe that the power of an illness can be expelled with songs and chants.'[55] Summarizing this view of medicine, Laín says: 'In contrast to superstitious and popular medicine, technical or scientific medicine must be a *muta ars*,

[51] Although we shall focus on particular Stoics, this line of thought is also key to other ancient schools, even the Epicureans, who are commonly classified in opposition to the Stoics. Hadot quotes the following Epicurean saying: 'Vain is the word of that philosopher who can ease no mortal trouble. As there is no profit in the physician's art unless it cure the diseases of the body, so there is none in philosophy, unless it expel the troubles of the soul. These and other like commands are laid on us by the law of our nature.' (Porphyry 31)

[52] In short, although being analytical is often what counts as being intelligent, at times it is not the most intelligent thing to do. There is a time for everything.

[53] 'Don't say: "They must have something in common, or they would not be called 'games' " - but look and see whether there is anything common to all. - For if you look at them, you won't see something that is common to all, but similarities, affinities, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look!' (Wittgenstein PI I,66)

[54] Ernst Lommatzsch, ed. (Leipzig, 1903), p. 199, 3-4

[55] (*De morbis* 555, in Laín xxii)

an art without words. The difference between this way of viewing therapy, and modern practice, to which verbal psychotherapy is so essentially and inseparably bound, cannot be more obvious.' (xxii) A distinction has been drawn here, on the one hand, between a silent body linked to scientific medicine, and a body open to words linked to what is deemed magical thinking on the other. This separation of physis and *logos*, body and mind, Nature and the self also assumes, like St. Antony, that language - and the ensuing awareness - is an extrinsic element that can drive a pernicious wedge between an otherwise healthy reunion of mind and world.

Laín's aim, on the contrary, is to defend logotherapy by searching for the justifications of its roots in ancient Greek thinking,[56] which in turn requires an interpretation of magical discourse. Incantation (*epode*) is the point where poetry, religion and medicine coalesce in Ancient thought.[57] Yet the same instinct for magical incantation also breaks out into a history of different practices.[58] So, whilst 'Logotherapy is as ancient as Western culture itself . . . the curative word . . . acquired in the Homeric world three forms quite distinct from one another: the "prayer" (*euchê*), the "charm" or "conjuration" (*epode*), and "persuasion" or "cheering" speech (*terpnos*, *thelktêrios logos*).' (32) These incantatory practices provide the bulk of the subject matter for my investigation of attention to the poetic use of words. Yet a crucial move related to the birth of philosophy, marks 'the historical process of the gradual approach of the *epôdê*, or at least of one way of interpreting the *epôdai*, to the "persuasive" word.' (32) The move is the birth of scientific thinking, which will lead to the tension, within the concept of *logos*, of saying (rhetoric) and understanding (science).[59] This rupture, within the notion of wholesomeness, between *legein* and *noesis* inaugurates a conceptual divide that will traverse this dissertation.

Ancient medicine as a whole did not separate body and mind as later modernity did, and this holistic conception of health is what granted the *epode* such an important role in therapy. Between Homer and Plato, the form of the *epode* was determined by a series of religious cults and texts.[60] Orphism, the most ancient of these, ties both music and poetry (song) to a primitive intention to influence nature through magical rituals.[61] This reveals a belief that *logos* and physis are (or can be) intimately related. Euripides, for one, gives voice not only to an expression of the

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[56] By tracing a connection between rhetoric and medicine, back to a proto-logotherapy, 'The following pages seek to . . . make a contribution to the history of the still not yet firmly established doctrine of verbal psychotherapy.' (Laín xxii)

[57] 'Wherever the magic attitude of mind reigns or survives, incantation is used, and only with medical intent. The use of the Greek *epode*, accordingly, stubbornly endures throughout the whole of Hellenic history, from Homer to the Byzantine world.' (43)

[58] '. . . although the magical intent of the charmer passes almost unchanged from one century to another, the form and the ingredients of the rite do not fail to undergo some degree of change with the passage of time.' (Laín 43).

[59] 'In summary: the therapeutic rhetoric of Gorgias would consider only the "opinion" of the patient; the technical cures of the expert in medicine adhere, on the other hand – or at least attempt to adhere – to the "truth" of what health, disease, and the nature of the patient "are". Above the persuasive *logos* should be the noetic and scientific *logos*.' (100)

[60] 'Orphism, the cult of Dionysus, the art of divination of Delphi, and the mythical and firmly based prestige, from a religious point of view, that the poems of Homer and Hesiod acquire' are the four main elements.

[61] 'The most pertinent legend and the most ancient graphic depictions . . . show us Orpheus taming birds and beasts with the music of his lyre.' But the magical intention of incantation goes beyond only music: the fame of Orpheus as a great singer, 'Nilsson has written, "is not based upon his music but upon the poems he declaimed while accompanying himself on the lyre." In short: the operative formula of Orpheus' magic charms was . . . in the most literal and etymological sense of the word: *epi-ôdê, in-cantamentum*.' (44-5)

idealistic desire to persuade destiny through Orphic song,[62] but also its realistic counterpart, the belief that fate cannot be affected by charming words, no matter how inspired[63]. In the latter perspective, which grew with the age of philosophy, necessity becomes a natural limit against the power of the charm.[64] This ritualistic intention 'of "enchanting" disease by magic songs', through which 'the human word might have the magic power to heal mortal men', (57) found, however, different ways of expressing beliefs and attitudes. The conjunction of the elements of music and word in song was polarized in the cults of Dionysus and Apollo, which traditionally offer (in its different variations in history), respectively, rituals that serve to express chaotic impulses of enraptured delirium and linguistically ordered composition. Thus each became respectively associated with the passions and reason.[65] Whereas the Dyonisian cult was not related to the word[66], only music and dance, Apollinian rituals certainly included the use of *epodai*, more than one type of it: 'Apollo, in fact, bequeathed to the Greeks two forms of the therapeutic word: the paean and the oracle', the 'solemn song of beseechment or praise' (which, 'now secularized, will serve to specify a literary form') and the prophet's ability for divine communication which 'often had a therapeutic character', and even became a profession, when the Greeks would pay them 'to aid them by magic to get out of their predicaments.' (56-7) Whereas the paean became a word for a certain formalization of the *epode*, the oracle is more closely related to the magical petition and its rituals of asking the natural forces of the world for assistance. The figure of Christ will later incarnate this magical desire: 'Clement of Alexandria, Christianizing this old belief in Apollo's therapeutic efficacy, will not hesitate to call Christ the "paeonic physician"'.[67]

The aforementioned historical approximation of the *epode* to rhetoric has its root in 'a major change affecting all spheres of human existence' in Greek life, from 'the eighth until well into the fifth century B.C.', the time of Socrates: 'the transition from a culture of "point of honor" to a culture of "guilt".' Although 'the Homeric idea of virtue (aretê) and of individual excellence' persist, 'alongside and within them a deep sense of religious and moral guilt . . . progressively gains ground'. (32-3) This included not only 'the fear of the sin of hubris and moral impurity' but also 'the psychic powers of "irrational" nature' (36), impulses tied to the Dyonisian excesses which might hopefully be therapeutically 'corrected' by paid professionals in cathartic rites. The fear of

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[62] Euripides' Iphigenia, 'powerless before her tragic fate . . . dreams of possessing the magic power which she does not have: "If I, oh my father, had Orpheus' language to persuade rocks with my charms, and make them follow me, and to bewitch with my words whomever I wished".' (*Iph. Aul.*, 1211-13 in Laín 49)

[63] "I, by dint of association with the Muses, darted to heaven, and among many reasons which I observed, I found none stronger than Necessity, nor is there any remedy against her in the Thracian tablets which the melodious Orpheus inscribed, nor in all the chosen medicaments which Phoebus gave the followers of Asclepius for mortal victims of disease".' (*Alc.*, 965-72 in Laín 49)

[64] 'Alone or accompanied by music, the magic word sings to the gods in the ceremonies of the initiates, performs marvelous acts, among them, the curing of diseases, and purifies the impure. We do not know with enough precision how far the belief of the Greek people may have extended 'literary evidence of the fifth century expresses with great clarity the deep conviction that the magic power of enchantment is confined by impassible boundaries: the *moira* or fate or every man, Nature, Necessity.' (53)

[65] To Nietzsche (Ch.4), 'art derives its continuous development from the duality of the *Apollinian* and *Dyonisian*'. (The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music 14), where the role of reason is to *restrict* unbridled passions.

[66] Among other evidence, Laín cites Pausanias, who 'calls the purifying or cathartic rites of Melampus "ineffable" or "unspeakable" (*aporrêtoi*). We must conclude from this that . . . there were beliefs, cries, frenzied dancing, and music (brazen horns, tambourines, Phrygian flutes), but no "word" in the strict sense. Within the Nietzschean conception of the Dyonisian one could speak of therapy *aus dem Geiste der Musik* . . . the orgiastic cult had no place at all for the *epôdé* as a sung or recited charm.' (55)

[67] (*Paedag.*, I, 2, 6 in Laín 56)

spirits is manifest in 'the considerable frequency with which *daimônes*, sometimes kindly, usually malign, are mentioned in the literary texts of the period'; and yet this 'consciousness of being "interfered with" by an unknown power from without', which is constantly feared by the 'Greece of Solon and Aeschylus', is sometimes rather mundanely expressed as common emotions: 'Theognis does not hesitate to call fear and hope "dangerous *daimônes*".' (34) This appears to suggest, like in the myth of inspiration, that sometimes spirits – or: muses, Forms, or perhaps simply certain thoughts or emotions: moods - can possess people with such force that they do things despite themselves, that is, in spite of their best intentions. Such demons are regarded, in the battle of Nietzsche's godly forces[68], as such powerful illnesses that their evil effects can infect an entire lineage.[69] In this religious picture, guilt becomes the cause of bad fortune – the natural process of guilt is that it effects retribution. So it 'cannot be surprising that in the cities there were swarms of professional purgers' (35), the "charlatans" to whom Plato alludes.[70] Yet Plato also refers to another set of oracles who provide good service, for they can assuage the anxiety of ancient guilt.[71] 'The seer, mantis', Laín continues, 'is at the same time a physician, iatros' - and so Apollo received the title of *iatromante*.[72]

A role model of ascetic Christian wisdom, St. Antony too was regarded a *iatromante*, where wisdom is the related to a talent of turning vice into virtue.[73] The steadfastness of healthy virtue gains its strength from the discipline of the will (Ch.2), and is secured through keeping the intellect sound, i.e. without artifice and falsity, as it came initially - as a beautiful and venerable gift of nature.[74] Holding fast to the soundness of mind, which for the Greeks was expressed in the virtue of *sophrosyne*, is thus, according to St. Antony, the aim of faith and prayer.[75] Wariness of words is related to this safekeeping of the virtue of the heart in the Christian religion of *garde du coeur* (Ch.2): 'let us carefully keep watch, and as Scripture says, let us keep our heart in all watchfulness.' (23) This vigilance is directed against the enemies of virtue, the demons that might take possession of

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[68] Nietzsche defends - rightly so - the healthy *balance* of the two impulses. So as the role of Apollinian reason becomes more dominant in religion as a form of morality, he rebukes the lack of understanding and fear of the Dyonisian: that 'Some people, either through a lack of experience or through obtuseness, turn away with pity or contempt from phenomena such as these as from "folk diseases", bolstered by a sense of their own sanity; these poor creatures have no idea how blighted and ghostly this "sanity" of theirs sounds when the glowing life of Dyonisian revellers thunders past them.' (17)

[69] 'The punitive contamination of human reality and of cosmic reality by an invisible miasma – it is not infrequent for the miasma to be known as a daimôn – now is transformed into an ominous and constant possibility. Not even rectitude in personal behavior affords freedom from guilt and punishment, for to Hellenic eyes the contaminating "stain" comes to be not only contagious but also hereditary.' (Laín 35)

[70] In Rep., II, 364b. But Plato's criticism is a rather singular rebuke in the midst of the Greeks. 'The Greek people, and not only the common rabble, believed in magic . . . throughout their entire history. The philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics will be powerless against that vigorous belief or with certain restrictions will continue to accept it. Let us earnestly affirm this reality against so many excessive idealizations of Hellenic culture.' (61)

[71] 'In their fits of madness, the prophetess of Delphi and the priestesses of Dodona conferred many benefits, public and private, upon Greece. Among others, prophetic madness found deliverance from the most horrible ailments and woes which, as a result of ancient guilts, and without it being known whence they come, afflict some families.' (*Phaedrus*, 244 a e)

[72] From Aeschylus [*Eum*., 62], 'because to him were attributed the curative oracles of Delphi and so many other places in which he spoke as the god of good health.' (58)

[73] A converter of souls, 'he was so competent in bringing benefit to everyone that many in military service and many of the prosperous laid aside the burdens of life and became monks from that point on. It was as if he were a physician given to Egypt by God. For who went to him grieving and did not return rejoicing?' (Athanasius 75)

[74] '*The Kingdom of God is within you.* All virtue needs, then, is our willing, since it is in us and arises from us. For virtue exists when the soul maintains its intellectual part according to nature. It holds fast according to nature when it remains as it was made – and it was made beautiful and perfectly straight.' (Athanasius 22)

[75] 'It was for this reason that Joshua, son of Nun, when exhorting the people, said: *Set your heart straight toward the Lord God of Israel* John's urging was: *Make your paths straight.*' (Athanasius 22)

the heart through evil thoughts and false images.[76] But the deceived ones are people, after all: for the demons 'were not created as the figures we now identify by "demon", for God made nothing bad. They were made good, but falling from the heavenly wisdom and thereafter wandering around the earth, they deceived the Greeks through apparitions.' (24) To the Christians, the polytheists are simply wrong,[77] having been deceived by false myths due to their suggestibility, like the aforementioned Greeks whom Antony rebuked for heeding first to letters instead of the mind were inclined to believe. These Greeks are of course the sophists. St. Antony's skill as a *iatromante* is due to his knowledge in exorcising wrong beliefs, which resides in 'the gift of discerning spirits . . . he recognized their movements, and he knew that for which each one of them had a desire and appetite.' (76) Exorcism is thus related to knowledge of desire, not words.

As noted earlier, the Greek literature of the fifth century also notes an increasingly widespread use of 'the metaphorical use of the terms *epôdê* and *thelktêrion* for the purpose of vigorously emphasizing the suggestive power of the human word', (63) and so "persuasive speech" becomes the translation of '*thelktêrios logos* or *thelktêrios mythos*', whereas before we would probably read "'bewitching speech'". (62) The change is, of course, due to the rising importance of rhetoric.[78] In short, 'speaking – speaking well – is at once knowledge and power, to such a point that the good speaker is comparable to men endowed with magic powers, the *epôdoi* or charmers.' (63) This difference in application of '*epode*', from the literal reading of 'bewitchment' as daimonic possession to the metaphorical sense of 'beautiful' was marked by an appreciation ('well', 'good') of the suggestive powers of the words themselves. This distinction will become increasingly manifest in the differences between poetry and prayer, as these forms grow apart.

This historical turn from supernatural to the natural logotherapy of rhetoric[79] implied two significant changes: a different conscience of the dangerous potential of the word, and of what constitutes "sickness". Whilst in magical thinking the *epode* was mostly determined by a relation between persuasion (*peitho*) and necessity (*ananke*), it is now also increasingly associated with force (*bia*),[80] namely the violence of men. The difference is in moral character.[81] This turn from perceiving the external limitations on our freedom as proceeding not (or not only) from the world (and its divine causal agents) but also from the actions and especially the words of men (which

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[76] The demons, Antony adverts, "'Should they see any Christians – monks, especially – laboring gladly and advancing, they first attack and tempt them, placing stumbling blocks in the way. Their stumbling blocks consist of evil thoughts . . . When they are unable to deceive the heart by conspicuous and filthy pleasure, again they make another kind of assault, and pretend to frighten it by fabricating phantasms'. (Athanasius 24-5)

[77] In the war of faith, 'like scorpions and snakes, he and his fellow demons have been put in a position to be trampled underfoot by us Christians. The evidence of this is that we now conduct our lives in opposition to him', (26) or they who "Frequently . . . appear to be like the devil . . . making grand statements'. (25)

[78] The application of 'the term "epôdê" to the suggestive word, to every verbal expression able to persuade through what it is in itself, had as their causes the very high prestige that the social efficacy of speech always enjoyed among the Greeks and the growing importance that skillful speech progressively acquired in the democratic "poleis" of the sixth and fifth centuries.' (63)

[79] '. . . the therapy of the word - no longer a magic therapy, but natural' (69)

[80] 'Force and speech naturally oppose and complement one another. But is one of the two terms superior to the other? A speech of Ulysses in Philoctetes gives the reply of Sophocles and perhaps the entire Greek people: "In the life of men it is the tongue [that is, the word] and not the act, that governs all" (98-99) *Peithô* must prevail over *Bia*.' (68) This is an exhortation to good politics and reasonability as a hedge against violence. Yet sometimes the two forces overlap, 'because the seduction of the human word can also be corrupting,. By undoing the old antithesis between *Bia* and *Peithô* Aeschylus will say that at times "deadly persuasion" overpowers (*biatai*) man (*Agam*., 385).' (65) This is also a leading theme (I shall not go into) in *Charmides*.

[81] As Euripides says, 'Speech does not have the same power in the mouth of obscure men as in that of renowned men.' (*Hec*., 293-95, in Laín 69)

then provoke actions) is a turn from supernatural to natural causality, and ways of influencing these. This also extends a concern with ethical education to the idea of logotherapy, as Laín notes in Aeschylus: "'Do you not know, Prometheus, that there are speeches that cure [*iatroi logos*] the sickness of wrath?" To which the Enchained One replies: "Yes, if one knows how to pacify the heart at the same times instead of persisting in drying up by force [*bia*] a spirit full of wrathful humor" (Prom., 377-80).' (69) What is remarkable here is that 'an especially violent disorder of the passions now receives the name of a "sickness," and is conceived of as an affection both psychic and somatic of human reality.' (69) The curing word becomes assuaging and also morally educative, namely in the sense that against 'the relative narrowness of the limitation which Nature has placed upon the psychological and curative efficacy of the word', there is a hope that 'If good sense were something that could be produced or instilled into man, the son of an honorable father, whom wise speeches had persuaded, would never become a villain.'[82] So just as guilt can infect a family line, so can good sense: and this partially justifies the suspicion of reason against the persuasion of words and frames the goal of the therapeutic word. The ethical concerns of logotherapy thus give rise to a series of questions that affect the relations between philosophy, education and language:

> 'Against *physis* in general and against the *physis* of man in particular, what can the *logos* accomplish, in its twofold dimension of reason and word? And how can that action of the *logos* be transformed into *techne*, into "art" or "technique"? In the life of man where does that which is nature, *physis*, end and where does that which is convention or law, *nomos*, begin? Philosophers, Sophists and physicians will strive to give a satisfactory reply to this difficult list of questions.' (71)

These concerns[83] will coalesce in Plato's Charmides (Ch.4), where the therapeutic effectiveness of the *epode* is symbolized in the virtue of *sophrosyne*. It also opens up, again, the main difference between *epode* as poetry or prayer, for the power of the *epode* 'does not come to it now from any magic virtue; that strength is not a pleading, orenda, governable by men especially endowed therein, but something natural and inherent in the word itself, when the word is apt and beautiful.' (118) Although in what Laín calls the 'magic-charm *epôdê* . . . there is a considerable portion of superstition and fraud . . . this does not impede the hearing of it, when it is received with belief, from working in a real way upon the . . . psychosomatic state of the hearer.' (120) This element of belief directly relates the magical *epode* with prayer. But belief is also a part of the therapeutic value of the aesthetic counterpart of the 'myth-*epôdê*', which 'not only acts suggestively when the hearer is already a believer in it, but by the natural virtue of its form and content (musical modulation, character and meaning of its text) it is able persuasively to elicit a new belief . . . or to make more intense the beliefs that already existed deep within that mind.' (120-1) The latter is clearly closer to a description of poetry, where, on the one hand the aesthetic element – an attention to language itself - is preponderant, and on the other, persuasion is directed not at nature but at men. The element of belief, however, is also important within the therapeutic paradigm, since for Plato human health 'is something more than a somatic *eukrasia* [optimal balance]. It

[82] (*Theognis*, I, 430-36, in Laín 71). The relations of philosophical education and moral character will be central in Plato's The Charmides, see Ch.4

[83] Again, these questions directly evoke traditional oppositions between naturalism and nominalism, realism and idealism, ethics and aesthetics.

requires that the mind possess a well-ordered system of "persuasions" or "convictions" (*peithô*) and intellectual and moral "virtues" (*aretai*).[84] This Platonic view of health as a holistic balance between different parts of the self (and not only the body) is what makes enchanting words a therapeutic requirement. This balance is symbolized in the good sense of '*sophrosyne*'.[85]

## Conversion and Nausea

Yet, Laín maintains that even whilst relating persuasion to natural causality, due to 'this constitutive relationship of persuasion and belief to human health'[86], health 'is not indifferent to the relation of man to the Divinity'. There is a relation of authority that requires the assent of the patient to the physician, which is similar to the requirements of conformity to divine will.[87] Assent (to persuasion) is what constitutes belief, and requires a content: I believe 'x' or in person or idea 'y'. Following Plato, Laín suggests that beautiful words are therapeutic by means of the inspirational process, which is grounded on authority: 'the *logos kalos* of the physician is a demonic operation belonging in a special way to the relationship of man to the gods (Symp., 203a)'. (126) A change is effected by belief in words; and a change in belief is 'a change of mind'. The therapeutic framing of religious inspiration leads to us to the topics of conversion and redemption, which are essentially grounded in moral sickness and guilt.

Conversion is by definition an experience that effects a significant alteration of the self. Hadot says that 'conversion in its religious and philosophical acceptations . . . deals with a change of mental order, which may range from the simple modification of an opinion to the total transformation of the personality.' (Hadot, "Conversion") Conversion relates to the Greek term of *metanoia*, which literally means 'a change of mind' or 'of understanding', and is intrinsic to philosophical education.[88] We have briefly introduced ancient philosophical education as a therapy against existential anxiety. Conversion presupposes a shift from a divided self, which perceives itself as essentially wrong ('sick') in relation to an ideal and natural state (physis), to its subsequent unification: the 'true' self is unified, the 'false' is not.[89] This 'inner' struggle of the dramatic attempt to discover one's sense in the world is crucial to the Judeo-Christian tradition, as is patent in the myth of Original Sin which structures its theology, and where the process of conversion is regarded as a reunification, a going back to a prior state of ideal, moral health (equated with the divine order, and mythically depicted in the Garden of Eve, Ch.3).

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[84] (Phaedrus, 270b.)
[85] Human health 'requires in short the sôphrosynê that the "beautiful speech" of Socrates must produce in the mind of Charmides.' (124-5)
[86] '. . . *Peithô*, persuasion, and pistis, belief, are words which, as we know, have the same root.' (126)
[87] Cf. Ch.4, the patient is required to have 'the deep and trusting confidence in the physician with which Charmides must yield or offer himself (parechein) to the action of the Socratic charm. (126)
[88] '. . . philosophy becomes the education of grownups. . . . And for grownups this is not natural growth, but change. Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions; so it is symbolized as rebirth.' (Cavell 125)
[89] 'The completest religions would therefore seem to be those in which the pessimistic elements are best developed. Buddhism, of course, and Christianity are the best known to us of these. They are essentially religions of deliverance: the man must die to an unreal life before he can be born into the real life.' (James 165)

As William James puts it, in his discussions of religious experience, 'unhappiness is apt to characterize the period of order-making and struggle . . . will take the form of moral remorse . . . The man's interior is a battle-ground for what he feels to be two deadly hostile selves, one actual, the other ideal.' (170-1) In the supernatural order of things, the ideal world and self are true, real ones: but the distance between these planes is that between an 'is' and a 'should'. That a 'should' enters into the scheme of things means that a new attitude toward things comes into being: the world becomes ethical and desiderative, and not just material and logical: in a word, the world gains a dimension of value. The simplest justification for petitionary prayer is that this fight between the actual and the ideal can be so fierce that the sick soul calls out for help: thus Christ the paeonic physician, *iatromante* in a long succession of mythological models for existential succor. The more desperate the plea, the more powerful the *epode* must be to take effect.[90] Prayer seems, on many accounts, to be the linguistic locus for this desiderative battle-ground for the ideal self. The petitionary element in prayer is where this is most obvious, for there is a plea for change.

If we compare religious anxiety (a desire for spiritual cure) to Roquentin's Nausea, we note that the difference between the actual and the ideal is also present in the latter, but as a concern not for God but for existence itself. Yet there is an additional difference: while James' sickness is a sense of guilt whose counterpoint is the supernatural (evident in the grammar of prayer), Roquentin seems to suffer from an acute sense of the physical presence of natural beings: although there is not properly a concern for moral perfection, there is an anxiety about a lack of metaphysics, namely that everything is only (excessively) physical: only 'is'. Sartre's *The Nausea* is a modern depiction of the role of philosophy in anguish, where Roquentin, the main character, gropes his way through the meaning of existence. Sartre's book tells of a philosophical journey that starts with existence as a source of anguish and ends with what seems to be a release from it. Roquentin has, in his own words, grown sick. At the very beginning of his diary he writes that 'Something has happened to me, I can't doubt it any more. It came as an illness does . . . A little while ago, just as I was coming into my room, I stopped short because I felt in my hand a cold object which held my attention through a sort of personality. I opened my hand, looked: I was simply holding the door-knob.' (8) Roquentin's Nausea is the experience of an overwhelming sense of existence – the perception of existence per se. With the Nausea, Sartre has created an image for what, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls 'objective presence', which Heidegger claims lies at the base of the Western metaphysics' traditional dichotomy of subject and object (Cf. H 60). 'Dasein' is Heidegger's ontological appropriation of 'the self' as the kind of being the human being is in our world is hinged on our attention to phenomena and primordially united with the world.[91] (Cf. §12) As opposed to the traditional mind/body and self/world dualisms, 'being-in designates a constitution of being of Dasein . . . But we cannot understand by this the objective presence of a material thing (the human body) "in" a being objectively present. Nor does the term being-in designate a spatial "in one another" of two things objectively present, any more than the word "in" primordially means a spatial relation of this kind. "In" stems from innan- to live, habitare, to

[90] 'Here is the real core of the religious problem: Help! help! No prophet can claim to bring a final message unless he says things that will have a sound of reality in the ears of victims such as these. But the deliverance must come in as strong a form as the complaint, if it is to take effect; and that seems a reason why the coarser religions, revivalistic, orgiastic, with blood and miracles and supernatural operations, may possibly never be displaced. Some constitutions need them too much.' (James 162) The last group comprises religions of Dyonisian inspiration.

[91] Strictly speaking, we can no longer speak of self in Dasein, since the term also aims to both resist and integrate the concept.

dwell.' (H 54) Roquentin is, from a Heideggerian perspective, striving to be-in the world, looking for his 'home' in the world, which he feels cut off from.[92]

Heidegger contrasts 'existence' in the sense of Nausea (thingness, Cartesianally-inflected materialism[93]) with what is disclosed in our everyday use of things (handiness). The being of the thing is disclosed in the sense that 'the less we just stare at the thing called hammer, the more we take hold of it and use it, the more original our relation to it becomes and the more undisguisedly it is encountered as what it is, as a useful thing.' (H 69) The being of other beings ('beings' comprising things, people, ideas, language) comes out in our interrelation with them, in our implicated perception of them, which is, after all, our normal way of being. In this description of our meeting with things, Heidegger uses the Greek term for 'things', *pragmata*, which is 'that with which one has to do in taking care in dealings (praxis).' This care, a sense of relatedness, is the key element in BT and is what structures Dasein. He calls this kind of seeing 'circumspection', meaning that things only make sense within a totality of reference.[94] Circumspection is a mode of attention to things[95], and indicates that useful things, when used and not simply 'stared at', reveal themselves as participating in a world.[96] This revelation of being-in the world is a disclosure of something that is already in place, namely our being in the world in modes of understanding and participation.

Roquentin's problem is that, in his growing obsession with the Nausea, he stares: as we have seen, he simply holds the doorknob. Heidegger's *pragmata*, on the other hand, are to be used: and before usage lies our already knowing our way about the world. In our everyday dealing with things, 'in opening the door, I use the doorknob.' (H67) In using doorknobs we do not exclusively pay attention to what a doorknob is, as something occupying space in reality – we pay more attention to how it works. This is especially true if it fails to work (we might discover it turns the other way). We discover what a doorknob in how it is used. (Accordingly, I am trying to suggest that in disclosing being-in-the-world, I use the poem: the problem is what 'use' means here.) Roquentin's failure to participate in the world is made salient through his failure to simply open doors (his 'Nauseas'). Heidegger indirectly describes Roquentin's experience of the salience of everyday things in existence as conspicuousness. 'When we discover its unusability, the thing becomes conspicuous. Conspicuousness presents the thing at hand in a certain unhandiness. But

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[92] 'I suffer in my wounded flesh which turns, walks, I walk, I flee, I am a criminal with bleeding flesh, bleeding with existence to these walls. I am cold, I take a step, I am cold, a step, I turn left, he turns left, he thinks he turns left, mad, am I mad? He says he is afraid of going mad, existence, do you see into existence, he stops, the body stops, he thinks he stops, where does he come from? What is he doing?' (68)

[93] Sartre's reference to Descartes is explicit in spite (and as a source) of Roquentin's confusion: 'I am. I am, I exist, I think, therefore I am; I am because I think, why do I think? I don't want to think any more, I am because I think that I don't want to be, I think that I ... because . . .' (67)

[94] So (the being of) a hammer initially and for the most part makes sense within (the being-in of) a workshop. 'The total relevance which, for example, constitutes the things at hand in a workshop in their handiness is "earlier" than any single useful thing, as is the farmstead with all its utensils and neighboring lands.' (H 84) This way of thinking turns the usual way of conceiving meaning around. Here 'hammer' only means because of a context of meanings: but these essentially originate in a world where we use hammers. Here we can clearly see the maxim of phenomenology, 'To the things themselves!' We can also recognize 'Wittgenstein's 'forms of life' in Philosophical Investigations are a close analogue, where the example is no longer things but people. Another Wittgensteinian metaphor for bringing out circumspection is 'language games', where words are things and grammar the totality of reference.

[95] 'Our absorption in taking care of things in the work-world nearest to us has the function of discovering . . . and with a varying attentive penetration.' (H71)

[96] 'In the scope of its heedful absorption in useful things at hand, does not Da-sein have a possibility of being in which, together with the innerworldly beings taken care of, their worldliness becomes apparent to it in a certain way?' (H72)

this implies that what is unusable just lies there, it shows itself as a thing of use which has this or that appearance and which is always also objectively present with this or that outward appearance in its handiness.' (H 73) Roquentin is himself conspicuous, obtruding in his surrounding world, unable to participate in the world by interacting with both people and things because he is stunned at the material substantiality of the world.[97] Heidegger warns that an 'analysis which starts with such beings and goes on to inquire about being comes up with thingness and reality.' (H 67) Roquentin is a philosophical parody of Cartesianally-inflected materialism.

But Roquentin's problem is not simply one of sensorial disagreeability, he is grappling with a philosophical problem of the meaning of our being in the world, not just things. Roquentin is anxious about the world as such, not anything in particular. As Heidegger tells us, the 'fact that what is threatening is nowhere characterizes what anxiety is about.' The leveled dreariness of everything around him (and of himself) makes the world salient: 'innerworldly beings in themselves are so completely unimportant that, on the basis of this insignificance of what is innerworldly, the world in its worldiness is all that obtrudes itself.' The Nausea does not matter only as the thingness of things, but as the risk of not being. 'What crowds in upon us is not this or that, nor is it everything objectively present together as a sum, but the possibility of things at hand in general, that is, the world itself.' How to be or not to be in the face of the multiple possibilities of fate is also a source of anxiety for Roquentin.[98] It is nothing definite that assails us, it is the very way in which we do not belong as ourselves to the world, in participation: 'what anxiety is anxious for is being-in-the-world itself.' (H 187)

Roquentin's Nausea is a fictional symptom of belief in the philosophical disease of Cartesian dualism. The dualism between mind and body that separates physis is itself born within philosophical discourse. This is why a counter-philosophy is needed to dispel the temptation of such philosophical pictures. This is, to a large extent, what Heidegger's 'destruktive' method is about. Notwithstanding, Heidegger knows that theoretical discourse is not itself capable of summoning us to actually participate in the being of beings - it only argues against different sets of arguments. Poetic language, Heidegger claims, constitutes the right therapy: 'The communication of . . . the disclosing of existence can become the true aim of "poetic" speech.' (H 162) By focusing on expression over informative content – on how instead of what - poetic speech also gives emphasis to ways of being, not only to substantiality, thus disclosing being-in (Ch.4).[99] In the same way that we instantly understand the 'signs' of the world – "'Initially" we never hear noises and complexes of sound, but the creaking wagon, the motorcycle' (H163) –, neither do we generally fail to understand the being of things except it is a first encounter or else through an abstractive effort of the imagination. From the point of view of BT (and PI) beings are always already relevant in the

[97] 'The Self-Taught Man is babbling and his voice buzzes gently in my ears. But I don't know what he's talking about . . . I feel this black wooden handle. My hand holds it. My hand. Personally, I would rather let this knife alone: what good is it to be always touching something? Objects are not made to be touched. It is better to slip between them, avoiding them as much as possible.' (82)

[98] 'I don't know what to do in front of the Passage Gillet. Isn't anyone waiting for me at the end of the passage? But there is also at the Place Ducoton at the end of the Rue Tournebride something which needs me in order to come to life. I am full of anguish: the slightest movement irks me. I can't imagine what they want with me. Yet I must choose: I surrender the Passage Gillet, I shall never know what had been reserved for me.' (39)

[99] Making the same point as Laín's myth-epode, 'Being-in and its attunement are made known in discourse and indicated in language by intonation, modulation, in the tempo of talk, "in the way of speaking." (H 162)

world. As such, the Nausea is not an insight into the nature of reality, but an abstraction of the actual (which already includes an understanding of our dealings in the world): 'It requires a very artificial and complicated attitude in order to "hear" a "pure noise."' (H164) Philosophy distorts the being of beings by adding thought: 'Gaining phenomenological access to the beings thus encountered consists rather in rejecting the interpretational tendencies crowding and accompanying us which cover over the phenomenon of "taking care" of things in general'. (H 67) To find a being means to let things be; and this might mean not thinking 'philosophically', or at least like Roquentin has been thinking. Philosophy is itself subject to *epodai*, pictures that filter perception.[100]

## Inspiration, Grace and Beauty

When at the end of the book Roquentin is mystically uplifted by a song, the weight of existence is extinguished. This episode marks a redemptive experience prompted by Roquentin's close attention to a piece of music. We have just seen that paying close attention to things provoked existential anxiety in Roquentin, yet at this point attention to a thing made of language, a song, seems to be palliative. This is also framed by his attention. Notably, his decision to attend– 'I'm going to pay attention because, as Madeleine says, I'm hearing it for the last time' – is bound to an awareness of his existential condition. This is why the objective presence of the world becomes a source of anxiety, it is proof of our condition as mortal creatures, as perishable things among other things. At the same time, however, this very condition determines us as Dasein, the kind of being of human beings.

So Sartre's allusion to finality and death frames the attention he grants the tune, and this pulls him out - in contrast to his own sense of self as a mere thing - from the thingness of the world.[101] Listening to the tune, Roquentin is absolved from his conspicuous thingness – the beauty he describes is so essentially different from everyday thingness, that it provides Roquentin with a counterpoint (or a medication of words: an *epode*) for objective presence. The transformative power of the tune is due to its having triggered a change by sequestering Roquentin from his daily routine: 'like a scythe it has cut through the drab intimacy of the world . . . it has taken us unawares in the disorder, the day to day drift.' (Sartre 113) It has forced him into a change of perspective, jolting him from his usual mood, and framed within the concept of conversion as Hadot (and Cavell) understand it – philosophy, a form of adult education: 'philosophy itself has always remained essentially an act of conversion . . . philosophical conversion is an uprooting from and a break with the quotidian, the familiar, the falsely "natural" attitude of common sense'. (Hadot, "Conversion") The capacity of the *epode* to bedazzle seems to constitute this capacity to break habit. Roquentin's

[100] 'Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language.' (Investigations I, 109)

[101] 'A while ago I was certainly far from swimming in beatitudes . . . Thoughts of . . . my wasted life. And then, still further down, Nausea, timid as dawn. But there was no music then . . . All the things around me were made of the same material as I, a sort of messy suffering . . . the very existence of the world so ugly that I felt comfortable, at home.' (113)

exorcism is cathartic, Dyonisian: music releases him from his spell, his philosophical belief in the Nausea, by lulling him into another - the tune that sings nature itself.[102]

Recapitulating, the thought of death led Roquentin to really attend to the song; the song, in turn, enraptured him, seized his attention because it presents something completely out of the ordinary, and was thus able to help produce a notable change in his sense of self: 'And I am ashamed. A glorious little suffering has just been born, an exemplary suffering. Four notes on the saxophone. They come and go, they seem to say: You must be like us, suffer in rhythm.' (113) With this birth of guilt, an ethical dimension seems to appear: an abstract sense of venerable value, established on a desire for beauty. It is his implicit comparison of his habitual (actual) perception of the world and self as fundamentally ugly to the beauty he perceives in the tune that generates, first of all, a humble desire to imitate this ideal beauty; yet there is a second aspect: the call is formally explicit: a process of inspiration is in place, whereby Roquentin is summoned to imitate the expressive rhythm of the tune. And yet he falls in love with the tune because, as he puts it, it is inexistent: 'It does not exist because it has nothing superfluous: it is all the rest which in relation to it is superfluous. It is. And I, too, wanted to be. That is all I wanted; this is the last word.' (114) But this ideal purity that stands out against Roquentin's usual existence, despite its highest universality and indefinability (H2, and Intro.) by no means ceases to be real. There is a transition from a focus on existence to being. (This final embracing of metaphysics is what provides the key to reading *The Nausea* as a spoof of Cartesianally-inflected materialism: without it there would be no contrast.)

The picture of beauty as having the capacity alter one's self is an extension of the classical picture of inspiration, of Platonic origin and largely propounded by the Romantics. As a brief, introductory example, at the end of Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp" we can read a pantheistic world of passive forms that are animated into thought by a divine wind that makes the harp sing.[103] Objects of art are regarded as doorways to the ideal realm, as icons for participation in this 'true' vision of life that is communicated in ineffable (the breeze is silent) thought to the poet, and then strung into enchanting words as the voice of the poet passively reacts to the wind. The poet thus discloses, in both the mystical tradition shows forth, the ineffable.[104] Within this model of poetic mediation, poems are icons for readers to participate in the universal thought, and poets its oracles.

When Alice goes through the Looking Glass, she enters into a world where everything is animated, personified.[105] The first beings she encounters in this topsy-turvy world cannot see her: she is like a spirit,[106] and when she interferes in the world, the beings are stunned beyond

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[102] 'In the Dyonisian dithyramb, man's symbolic faculties are roused to their supreme intensity: a feeling never before experienced is struggling for expression – the destruction of the veil of Maya, Oneness as the source of form, of nature itself. The essence of nature was now to find symbolic expression . . . not only the symbolism of the mouth, the eye, the word, but the rhythmic motion of all the limbs of the body in the complete gesture of the dance.' (Nietzsche 21)

[103] 'And what if all of animated nature / Be but organic Harps diversely framed, / That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps / Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze, / At once the Soul of each, and God of all?' (Coleridge 104)

[104] 'There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical.' (Wittgenstein TLP 6.522)

[105] She 'noticed that what could be seen from the old room was quite common and uninteresting, but that all the rest was as different as possible. For instance, the pictures on the wall next the fire seemed to be all alive, and the very clock on the chimney-piece . . . had got the face of a little old man, and grinned at her.' (127)

[106] 'But the King took no notice of the question: it was quite clear that he could neither hear her nor see her.' (129)

expression.[107] When the King goes to write a memorandum so as to never forget the singular experience of levitating, Alice plays a trick on him and seizes the pencil: she is a spirit directing the writing, making the King write 'all manner of things that I don't intend –'. (131) The Queen quickly recognizes that this is 'not a memorandum of your feelings!' Ironically, Alice next turns to find a book that is 'all in some language I don't know', and stumbles across the notoriously nonsensical poem 'Jabberwocky'. Now it is she that is stunned because of this language so strange that 'she couldn't make it out at all'. Yet it is strangely suggestive: 'Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas – only I don't exactly know what they are! However, somebody killed something: that's clear, at any rate –' (134) Carroll's parody of inspiration hits upon a keynote of contemplative attention, which is a form of passive thinking where the self is tuned, like Coleridge's harp, so as to be affected by the afflatus. This is utterly transparent in Weil's following image of attention, which includes a series of implications fundamental to traditional metaphysics, and contemplation in particular:

> 'Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object; it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts, as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him, without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above all, our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object that is to penetrate it.' (62)

Roquentin's desire to be like the tune relates to this picture. The melody can act as a counterweight to 'existence' conceived as the thingness or 'substance' of things and people in the world because the focus has shifted (with the myth-*epode*) from what to how things are. The ('being of' this) song and Roquentin, the attentive listener, suffer in rhythm. That portion of time is in a particular way. In listening, he is 'inspired', 'possessed' by the daemon, the particular mood of song: he imitates it. This mimetic aspect of inspiration is a key aspect of contemplation, whereby the subject is to be 'penetrated' by the contemplated object. When Roquentin asks Madeleine to play the record again, he begins to muse about the creator of the song. 'I no longer think of myself.' In other words, he ceases to be the subject who is the object of his own thoughts. In Weil's religious thinking, this emptiness of thought that awaits to become something else is related to the disciplined subtraction of the self (Ch.2) she calls 'decreation' (and which relates to the longstanding spiritual tradition of apophatic or negative theology, also called the *via negativa*).

Roquentin no longer posits himself as a self-reflexive thinking subject, a *res cogitans* thinking about his place in the world. This is, in turn, why his sense of redemption is linked to his (and the tune's) inexistence. His shame is the negative symptom of his will just to be, the desire to imitate the presence of beauty the tune has revealed to him, which has finally released him from his self by shaking loose the shackles of his habitual 'I'. Moreover, since the tune has already been described as inexistent, Roquentin's disappearance as a subject depicts his turning into the same mode of being as the tune: the separation between subject and object disappears through participation.

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[107] '. . . she had never seen in all her life such a face as the King made, when he found himself held in the air by an invisible hand, and being dusted: he was far too astonished to cry out'. (129)

When Heidegger explains the importance of *methexis* in Plato, he is talking of how we put presence (*anima*, Ch.3) in things. This is (what Derrida will also later expound on, Ch.4) the basis of Western metaphysics. Heidegger explains *methexein* as the 'taking part of something in something', giving the example of a table. This might strike us as strange - an animal would be easier to grasp as being alive (for he has quoted Nietzsche's sense of "being" as "alive"). But when we think of how we let tables come to presence by our using them and incorporating them in our everyday lives, and of how we sometimes behave towards objects as if they were people (shouting at them, keeping them close, etc.), then his sense becomes clearer. So it is not only that a thing is physically present: if I were writing upon some other thing, that difference would make my experience of writing different; just as if I use another pen or write in a different place: all these things, their totality, constitutes what happens. 'According to Plato, the idea constitutes the Being of a being. The idea is the face whereby a given something shows its form, looks at us, and thus appears, for instance, as this table.' The idea of form, *eidos*, will be all important when we look at Aristotle in Ch.3. 'In this form, the thing looks at us. Now Plato designates the relation of a given being to its idea as *methexis*, participation. But this participation of the one, the being [thing], in the other, the Being [idea], already presupposes that the duality of being and Being does exist. *Methexis*, the participation of beings in Being, consists in what the participle designates grammatically.' (WCT 222)

This is what Roquentin tells us: 'I am in the music.' (18) In other words Roquentin, who had 'nauseatingly' equated his self with existence, 'is' through not being himself (no longer 'I' except grammatically, to state the experience of this phenomenon) – i.e. by (phenomenally) being the tune. A different presence from the Nausea emerges: mystical, indefinite like 'be', yet still a 'presence' - sustained by an attention to the being of the tune, which (such is the nature of music) traverses time. The emergence of this presence (its 'beauty') thus requires a constant attention to the flow of the present phenomenon.[108] This is a skill, that of contemplation. What he perceives, in the broader sense of understanding, during this time in which he is attentively listening, is the tune. During that time – the episode which I had initially referred to as an 'alteration of self' – the phenomenal fact is that Roquentin is the tune. Truly paying attention to a thing is phenomenally becoming that thing: imitating it.

Weil's mystical experience that resulted in her conversion to religion is also related to attention to an aesthetic object, namely the poem "Love (III)" by George Herbert.[i] In a letter, she writes, 'I learned it by heart. Often, at the culminating point of a violent headache, I make myself say it over, concentrating all my attention upon it and clinging with all my soul to the tenderness it enshrines.' Note how this mnemonic element of interiorizing these words for repetition is already an important step in the mimetic process. Weil continues, 'I used to think I was merely reciting it as a beautiful poem, but without my knowing it the recitation had the virtue of a prayer. It was during one of these recitations that, as I told you, Christ himself came down and took possession of me.' (27) *Mutatis mutandis*, both experiences exhibit the same elements, framed by inspiration and

[108] '. . . the ancient interpretation of the being of beings is oriented toward the "world" or "nature" in the broadest sense and . . . it indeed gains its understanding of being from "time". The outward evidence of this – but of course *only* outward – is the determination of the meaning of being as *parousia* or *ousia*, which ontologically and temporally means "presence". Beings are grasped in their being [*Sein*]as "presence"; that is to say, they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time, the "*present*".' (H25)

spiritual healing through demonic possession of the *iatromante* himself; as Sartre will soon say, these are: contemplation of ideal beauty, shameful humility, and a suffering that opens way to the presence of a joyful love. The major difference lies in what follows from the experience: Roquentin decides to write a book (he is 'inspired', the tune calls on him like the ancient muses do); Weil becomes a Christian (inspired by, demonically possessed by the presence, the grace of Christ). Somehow both their lives gain sense, are reunited with existence through their respective experiences. But while Weil gains a belief in God, Roquentin does not. Weil's inspiration is explained by, and thenceforth secured by, the example of the passion of 'Christ', which is expressed in the poem she has so formulaically repeated: she thereby converts, entering into a community of believers and a way of life that is grounded in 'Christ'. Roquentin's only wish and recourse, on the other hand, is the verb 'to be'. That is all he desires, 'to be', and as such be redeemed from existence. Redemption is different from conversion: Weil has a cause which provides her with a (religious picture as a) justification for existence, Roquentin has only effects to describe the world with, no meta-concept to turn his mind to beyond the particularity of this song. Yet the song managed to make him feel right in the world, belong.

For an *epode* to work, its words must hold a certain power. Roquentin summarizes the three ingredients necessary for the prospective work of art that are key to his redemption. 'It would have to be beautiful and hard as steel and make people ashamed of their existence.' (115) These criteria synthesize key aspects of poetic attention, and provide us with a way of thinking about inspiration starting from the material objects that trigger it. I shall be returning to these criteria sporadically, under the respective topics of desire and impressions, necessity and immortality, and guilt, conscience and ametrical perception. Before moving on to some introductory remarks on the metaphor, I would like to make some brief comments on Roquentin's criteria for redemptive artworks.

As we have seen with Laín, the metaphorical sense of bewitchment in *epodai* is beauty: this criterion expresses the object's capacity to mesmerize - and continue to do so - after Roquentin has conceded the object his attention. In this sense, what we call 'beauty' is, more often than not, a retrospective description of how an object has effectively secured our attention. In other words, while Weil reminds us that contemplation (our looking) requires a certain negative effort of attention (not seeking), we must keep in mind that the contemplated object must also meet a certain standard.

This standard, in Weil, appears obvious: it must serve (and continue to serve) as a mediator, a means of ineffable communication, to God. In art we find the same kind of attitude excepting the communicative element: there need not be any transcendent dimension to talk to. The brilliant artwork is itself transcendent by being completely different (original) in comparison to other artworks. Wittgenstein demonstrates this point by contrasting superlative examples in art to handcraft, where objects are primarily made to be used, not contemplated.

> "We talked of correctness. A good cutter won't use any words except words like 'Too long', 'All right'. When we talk of a Symphony of Beethoven we don't talk of correctness. Entirely different things enter. **One wouldn't talk of appreciating the *tremendous* things in Art.** In certain styles in Architecture a door is correct, and the thing is you appreciate it. But **in the case of a Gothic Cathedral what we do is not at all to find it correct** - it plays an entirely different role with us. The **entire *game* is different**. It is as different as to

judge a human being and on the one hand to say 'He behaves well' and on the other hand 'He made a great impression on me'. (Wittgenstein LC 8)

This distinction between kinds of objects signals that 'beauty' is a mark for those that are meant to be contemplated. How they affect us and require different kinds of attention is directly related to another distinction Wittgenstein makes between using 'well' or 'good' in a relative ('trivial') or absolute ('ethical') sense.[109] The ethical sense presupposes a sense of necessity that pertains to universal values (Intro. and Ch.2). Contemplation is the perception of universal ideas, the transcendental realm where Good, Beauty and Truth all belong to the same unitary element. Here distinctions are eliminated or simply unnecessary because what matters is a sense of value, not existence.[110] As Weil has implied above, one would not dream of altering something like a Symphony of Beethoven (but might not be so emotionally concerned about changing the size of a door). Perhaps here we can see that the point is not so much that everything is correct and balanced about the Symphony, but that it serves as an example of what Weil calls reality itself: absolute, universal beauty – a thing to be revered for its ineffable power.[111] What makes for this is the contemplation of existence itself as meaningful. The way it clutches us is ineffable because it is a personal, untranslatable experience: we can only point at the Symphony as its source (although as James has said, one needs musical ears – attention - to recognize its force). The kind of attention required by the craftsman (who is judging correctness), however, is different: to make a good door, the cutter needs an eye for what is wrong in comparison to certain styles, fashions, which are essentially popular habits. The technician works within the limits of imitating, with a certain leeway for interpretation, certain conventions. The artist makes leeway by breaking ground, in aversion to the dominant arrogance of mainstream (and thus impersonal) convention. This means that the beautiful work is so particular that it stands beyond comparison: it is superlative because it is one of a kind and so, like God, a *transcendens;* yet unlike God, it is made in this world.

It is because the ideal example is as hard as steel that Roquentin has a counterpoint in regards to which he feels belittled, ashamed, humbled.[112] The ideal awakens his shame because it brings his existential condition into perspective: he is a creature born into a world where beauty exists. His shame is his sense of the distance between his actual self and his ideal self as a participative 'being'. As Simone Weil puts it, 'The wrong humility leads us to believe that we are nothing in so far as we are ourselves – in so far as we are certain particular human beings. True

[109] 'Supposing that I could play tennis and one of you saw me playing and said "Well, you play pretty badly" and suppose I answered "I know, I'm playing pretty badly but I don't want to play any better," all the other man could say would be "Ah, then that's all right." But suppose I had told one of you a preposterous lie and he came up to me and said, "You're behaving like a beast" and then I were to say "I know I behave badly, but then I don't want to behave any better," could he then say "Ah, then that's all right"? Certainly not; he would say "Well, you ought to want to behave better." Here you have an absolute judgment of value, whereas the first instance was one of relative judgment.' (Wittgenstein LE 5)

[110] 'In recent books on logic, distinction is made between two orders of inquiry concerning anything. First, what is the nature of it? how did it come about? what is its constitution, origin and history? And second, What is its importance, meaning or significance, now that it is once here? The answer to the one question is given in an *existential judgment* or proposition. The answer to the other is a *proposition of value* . . . a *spiritual judgment*. Neither judgment can be deduced immediately from the other. They proceed from diverse intellectual preoccupations, and the mind combines them only by making them first separately, and then adding them together.' (James VRE 4)

[111] 'The word good has not the same meaning when it is a term of the correlation good-evil as when it describes the very being of God.' (GG 99)

[112] 'The Negress sings. Can you justify your existence then? Just a little? I feel extraordinarily intimidated.' (115)

humility is the knowledge that we are nothing in so far as we are human beings as such, and, more generally, in so far as we are creatures.' (129) Roquentin's shame might be understood as the result of the object's beauty calling his self to a humility that forces the disappearance of his ego, in what Roquentin feels as a desire 'to drive existence out of me . . . to purify myself'. Humility, Weil tells us, is what defines contemplative attention. 'In the intellectual order, the virtue of humility is nothing more nor less than the power of attention.' (GG 128) She provides an example with music: 'When we listen to Bach or a Gregorian melody, all the faculties of the soul become tense and silent in order to apprehend this thing of perfect beauty . . . The mysteries of faith are degraded if they are made into an object of affirmation and negation, when in reality they should be an object of contemplation.' (GG 129) There is no choice to be made here, there is an impact of a tremendous being. For Weil, humility is what guarantees goodness (and in the intellectual plane, truth): 'It is impossible to do harm to others when we act in a state of prayer'. (126) This state of self-surrender follows from humility, which is trained in the subtractive process of the 'I' she calls 'decreation'.[113] Through decreation Weil points to a mystical use for the 'glorious little suffering' that was imparted to Roquentin as shame.

## Motive for Metaphor

In "Motive for Metaphor"[ii], Wallace Stevens presents a brief picture of the process of inspiration. The first stanza speaks of an afflatus moving between the sound of words, which are half dead because they have no meaning but only form. There is here a primal indefiniteness of meaning. Yet the poet is happy, and continues feeling happy into the second stanza, which takes place in the creative season of spring, when fragments of world ('the half colors of quarter-things') gain qualities as the poet, in the last two lines of this stanza, grants adjectives to this upper half of the world he now concentrates on (the sky, clouds, bird and moon). Under this half-light the moon reflects of the sun, a new world appears under the crafted signs of the poet. Light here is merely a reflection ('the obscure moon lighting an obscure world'), as language is said to be a representation and not the thing; and so what is expressed is doomed to be incomplete, just as the poet too is not quite himself in this world of words. Yet this role does not seem to bother the poet (as it did Carroll's King), who desires 'the exhilaration of changes:' that produce the 'motive for metaphor'. Metaphor is therefore somehow justified by a desire for joyful transformations, and for the last two stanzas, we are thrown by the colon into the nature of these changes.

Apparently, Stevens tells us, 'metaphor' (or the very 'motive for metaphor') shrinks from the weight of the sun ('primary noon'), the omnipotent element that lays down the rules, the syntactic conventions, the 'A B C of being'. The obscure moon lights the obscure world by reflecting the order conveyed by the Apollinian sun, and it is under the dynamics of this struggle between red (the shifting, 'ruddy temper' of the Dyonisian forces that challenge reason) and the blue of the hard steel (the logical necessity and order of reason that must also shape words:

[113] 'Decreation: to make something created pass into the uncreated. Destruction: to make something created pass into nothingness. A blameworthy substitute for decreation.' (GG 32)

meaning) of the hammer that comes down in force to weld intention and form together into musical meaning, as the poet, symbolized here in the figure of Volcano or Thor, fuses the complementary colors into the metaphor of understanding itself: light (the 'sharp flash').[114] Fixed into completion, the wind is finally made *sound* (in the double meaning of the word) – for in autumn it was 'a cripple'. The wind that is healthy, therefore, is that is made whole by being crafted into sound, and that like a metaphor (as a unit) or a poem (as a larger, composite whole) can carry within itself duplicitous meanings. Starting as an intimation (indeterminate meanings, inchoate ideas, just the silent wind of meaningless words), the poem was formed once words were constrained into an articulation that balances nonsense (sounds) and sense (understanding, articulate meanings). The word as metaphor (the steel that is forged) has the hardness of poetic words, which are semantically dense. This density (which Roquentin must aim for) is elevated to the superlative degree (could mean anything, were it not constrained by the rest of the poem) in the closing symbol of the poem: the mysterious 'X'.

Yet being a symbol for indeterminacy, it does not disclose the motive for metaphor. The inscription produced by the hammer is not a metaphor, since metaphors figuratively suggest similarities, and there is nothing that we can compare an absence of meaning (what X symbolizes) to. The 'X' acts in the poem as an indeterminate replacement for the role that 'God', 'muses' or other religious spirits play in the allegory of inspiration. The subtraction of the metaphor, in this case, is equivalent to the subtraction of a determinate mythology or faith; it does not, in other words, supply a cause for its faith, for persisting in the role of the blacksmith. So apparently poems themselves are motives for metaphor, but as extended metaphors – allegories. In short, the poem does not supply what it is a metaphor of: it simply becomes, itself, another motive for metaphor. So in this regard, the poet stands in the same position as the believer: inspiration is the inexplicable phenomenon, despite its different expressions. Yet a poem need only express an individual belief or experience, whereas a prayer has to belong to a collective belief. At first sight, therefore, the model of inspiration of the poet is more ineffable (in the strict sense of indeterminate) than that of the believer, given that it reduces the name of the contemplated objected to a bare form, like the words the poem began with: the repetition of a word without meaning. But this is not necessarily the case when we take a closer look at what contemplation means for the mystic.

## Weil's "Our Father"

Weil's commentary of the "Our Father"[iii] analyses each verse in turn before summarizing the general structure at the end. Her exegesis is indeed a close reading, a testimonial of what it means, in her experience, to attentively repeat these precise words - what it means to believe in God and to pray as a result of this belief. Here we can read her motivations (not for metaphor but) for the contemplation of God, as participating in the dense meaningfulness of each word. Reading her commentary of the prayer is equivalent to going through her reading, her *experience* of the prayer (and this is what makes it a 'close' reading). More than just reading, Weil learnt the prayer, in

[114] We shall later return to this synthesis that is the metaphor.

Greek, by heart, and repeated it every morning.[115] Her dedication was so extreme that if 'during the recitation my attention wanders or goes to sleep, in the minutest degree, I begin again until I have succeeded in going through it again with absolutely pure attention.' (WG 29) This is not interpreting meanings, but attaching herself to those words.

The first verse tells us (and *shows* her) that even though, as the creator of everything, there 'is nothing real in us which does not come from him', he 'is in heaven' (in Weil, reality is not opposed to the transcendent, on the contrary). God's distance is a constraint on our movement, meaning that what moves can only be our attention: 'We cannot take a single step toward him. We do not have to search for him, we only have to change the direction in which we are looking.' This simple incapacity to determine the object of our contemplation brings us closer to Stevens' 'X'. This becomes clearer in relation to the second verse, where God's name is hallowed because 'God alone has the power to name himself. His name is unpronounceable for human lips.' (Weil 143) Like the wind, like a spirit, like light, God cannot be grasped. And yet some desire, some indefinite motive leads the poet and the believer to cling to a name, for it is the only thread that can sustain thinking.[116] The name of God - or the word 'God' – is an icon, a doorway to the supernatural: 'Man has access to this name, although it also is transcendent.' Yet the supernatural, for Weil, is precisely that which is real.[117] It is real because, like a beautiful poem, it is perfectly balanced and cannot be corrected. This is why we are not to attempt to pursue the transcendent - only turn our eyes toward it: we can only contemplate beauty as a mark of the divine. Given the transcendental value of God's beauty in the contemplative schema, the direction our attention must turn to is metaphorically vertical. The economy of inspiration is vertical.[118]

One of the elements of verticality is precisely distance: being creatures of the earth, the ideal is out of arm's reach. Divine beauty is meant to be contemplated, in the rationale of prayer, because it is a means to *metanoia*, since moral transformation is effected through desire: 'We cannot prevent ourselves from desiring; we are made of desire; but the desire that nails us down to what is imaginary, temporal, selfish, can, if we make it pass wholly into this petition, become a lever to tear us from the imaginary into the real and from time into eternity, to lift us right out of the prison of self.' (144) The lever is yet another image for verticality as the mark of communication (petition) with transcendental (real) reality; it provides the poles for Weil's picture of grace. Inspiration is also constrained by the lever.[119] Petitioning is the attentional harnessing of contemplation.[120] Essentially a petition, prayer is the theatre where our desires are put into transformative play through

[115] 'The infinite sweetness of this Greek text so took hold of me that for several days I could not stop myself from saying it over all the time . . . every day before work, and I repeated it very often in the vineyard.' (WG 29)
[116] 'The name of any being is an intermediary between the human spirit and that being; it is the only means by which the human spirit can conceive something about a being that is absent. God is absent. He is in heaven. Man's only possibility of gaining access to him is through his name. It is the Mediator.' (WG 143-4)
[117] 'It shines in the beauty and order of the world and it shines in the interior light of the human soul. This name is holiness itself . . . In asking for its hallowing we are asking for something that exists eternally, with full and complete reality, so that we can neither increase nor diminish it, even by an infinitesimal fraction.' (144)
[118] 'All the natural movements of the soul are controlled by laws analogous to those of physical gravity. Grace is the only exception.'; 'To come down by a movement in which gravity plays no part… Gravity makes things come down, wings make them rise; what wings raised to the second power can make things come down without weight?' (1; 4)
[119] 'Creation is composed of the descending movement of gravity, the ascending movement of grace and the descending movement of the second degree of grace'. (4)
[120] 'To ask for that which exists, that which exists really, infallibly, eternally, quite independently of our prayer, that is the perfect petition.' (144)

recitation: 'The Our Father contains all possible petitions; we cannot conceive of any prayer not already contained in it. It is to prayer what Christ is to humanity. It is impossible to say it once through, giving the fullest possible attention to each word, without a change, infinitesimal perhaps but real, taking place in the soul.' (Weil 151)

The nature of what it is to give attention to words in prayer can only be understood in relation to pure, ideal desire. The problem is that the contemplation of beauty, given the impossibility that desire possess it, can only lead to suffering. Yet conceiving a use for suffering helps to explain Epictetus' hospital as an image for the education of philosophers. Thus Weil explains that to correctly read the next petition that 'Thy Kingdom Come', 'we must just invite him purely and simply, so that our thought of him is an invitation, a longing cry.' She illustrates this petition: 'It is as when one is in extreme thirst, ill with thirst; then one no longer thinks of the act of drinking in relation to oneself, or even of the act of drinking in a general way. One merely thinks of water, actual water itself, but the image of water is like a cry from our whole being.' (144) Suffering has a use in religious thinking: the image of the lever is meant to make this clearer: 'We lower when we want to lift. In the same way "he who humbleth himself shall be exalted". There are necessity and laws in the realm of grace likewise.' (Weil 92) The absence of God (as of 'X') can begin to be understood not as an object, but as an 'object' - a grammatical constraint for contemplative thinking (Ch.2): Stevens cannot cross out God inasmuch as 'X' serves the same purpose of standing in for ineffability as 'God', and ineffability is the mark of oracular discourse. The difference is that 'God' bears a more particular grammatical constraint by belonging to a restrictive - moral – picture. Whereas God points toward a kind of life, a poetic 'X' points at me for interpretation, to find out in which way these words are about me. I speak to God, the poem speaks to me.

## Temporality in therapy: *lysis* and *crisis*

Before moving on to the topic of desire in St. John of the Cross, I would like to return to our comparison of Weil and Sartre to talk about the concept of redemptive artworks, and especially to contrast two kinds of attention. To explain the therapeutic unification of the self, James resorts to a medical analogy. 'The older medicine used to speak of two ways, *lysis* and *crisis*, one gradual, the other abrupt, in which one might recover from a bodily disease.' (183) He pursues this analogy of conversion by comparing it to two ways of searching, which are ultimately two ways of using desire: by volition (actively) and by self-surrender (passively). He gives the example of trying to remember a forgotten name: we usually make an effort to recollect, but if that fails sometimes it is best just to 'give up the effort entirely, think of something altogether different . . . some hidden process was started in you by the effort, which went on after the effort ceased, and made the result come as if it came spontaneously.' (205) This aspect of waiting is a fundamental element in Weil's description of the passive attitude of contemplation. In an active search we try to possess the idea, in a passive search, we do not search, but wait for the idea to come. Yet we do not forget it: we simply desire it. As in our examples, repetition (*lysis*) leads to *crisis*: Roquentin

heard the same record every evening, Weil had read the poem many times: only later did these objects present themselves and thus the world under a new light.

Yet for *crisis* to take place, there must first be a motive for searching - a desire - and so *lysis* always precedes *crisis*: 'there are two things in the mind of the candidate for conversion: first, the present incompleteness or wrongness, the "sin" which he is eager to escape from; and, second, the positive ideal which he longs to compass.' (209) The problem is that if the desire is to escape existential anxiety (an anxiety about what is nowhere and thus everywhere), then the search becomes objectless. The poem and the song, however, provide a token of this ideal desire, a natural form (language) of supernatural value.[121] Because inscriptions remain the same - neither tune nor words are transformed -, what changes in time can only be the perceiving self. The ink and recorded sounds are fixed, yet we may react to them differently in time: their 'meaning' has changed. In this sense, *metanoia* is the contrastive experience of coming to terms with change within the self by comparison to a fixed object. The words do not change: *I* have because their meanings have. Thus interpretation is pivotal, part of the central area of the self that spins in its changing perception of the world and its perspectives. Interpretation is the active seeking that is not contemplation; but then again, contemplation is not the only way of looking at things. Before we understand something, we have to meditate on it. It is only after we have understood its particulars that we can relax our thinking and just look at it.

## The language of the heart

In religion, this distinction is present in the difference between apophatic and cataphatic prayer. Apophatic prayer is a listening: essentially beyond words, just as Weil's contemplation stands upon a mountain, over thinking, and as St. Antony's mind is beyond (i.e. before) letters, ineffability pertains to *noesis*. A significant justification for this kind of prayer is precisely its therapeutically holistic quality: 'Apophatic prayer goes beyond thinking, which is separative, or reductionistic, to awareness, which is unitive.' (Goodwin 118) Whilst the cataphatic is linked to analysis, the apophatic is related to intuition. This latter, redemptive medicine, which heals the crippled wind not through verbal thinking but an awareness (a perception of the mind), suggests a strange relationship to words, since prayer (and poems) is made of these yet goes 'beyond' them. This intimates that the desire to transcend words might be what provokes (the motive for) metaphor, given that language is a hurdle in prayer.[122] But not all prayer is of this order: while apophatic prayer 'goes beyond meditation, which in the West is based on discursive reasoning, to contemplation', cataphatic prayer goes to a different sort of thinking activity from contemplation: meditation (Ch.2). Contemplation and meditation are the two poles of spiritual discipline behind 'attention'. Moreover, they are, in the tradition of spiritual discipline, *sequentially* linked.

[121] 'In everything which gives us the pure authentic feeling of beauty there really is the presence of God. There is as it were an incarnation of God in the world and it is indicated by beauty.' (Weil 150)
[122] 'It is hard to say where the movement of a prayer beings: from the self, or from God. The desire itself may be a higher being. Human language is a limitation.' (Goodwin 119)

In the *Dark Night of the Soul*, St. John of the Cross describes the journey of the soul toward its mystical union with God through the exegesis of a poem. This journey is 'a "dark night," . . . [a] purgative contemplation, which causes passively in the soul the negation of itself'. (I, Exposition, 1) This therapeutic divestment of the self is an account of contemplation, which St. John calls the Passive Night and follows the Active Night which is his account of meditation.[123] This sequence parallels that of James' therapeutic *lysis* and *crisis*: *lysis* is meditation, the analytical interpretation of discoursive thinking, whereas *crisis* relates to contemplation and inspiration or grace: the mystical encounter with a cause for discourse. When Ryle talks of the two meanings that in English we simplistically collapse into 'to think', he distinguishes between the sense of pondering and of believing. I want to import this distinction to elucidate religious talk, since the supernatural talk of contemplation tends to eclipse the natural sense of thinking as pondering.[124]

Weil, however, has already made this distinction evident, in saying that the contemplative view from the mountain includes the 'particular and already formulated thoughts,' the 'diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of', albeit at 'a lower level and not in contact with' the suspended, empty thought that is penetrated by the object. Weil's conception of faith as a perception of the supernatural in reality does not eschew the natural, namely the intellect and critical thinking: she distinguishes between skills of the soul.[125] Ryle too distinguishes between 'the thinking which is the travelling and not the being at one's destination . . . the work and not the repose.' (Ryle 269) Especially in art, the work of thinking that goes into the forger's crafting is easily forgotten in light of the completed object's aura of beauty, its enchantment. The result, the object - a making -, in short, obfuscates the process - a doing. In religion too, awe with the mystical aspect of contemplation (the ineffable joy of revelation) may lead those less analytically-minded to overlook the discipline in spiritual methodology that ordinates it (Ch.2). In the divine intervention of grace – the expected result of contemplation - there is, however, in comparison with artistic inspiration, a different end result for the process: I do not make an object, I am made by God.

In St. John's account, higher, contemplative perception (the capacity to see in the night) cannot be attained without prior absorption of the sensual self into the spiritual. This jump from the natural and active to the supernatural and passive is so different that if the soul

> 'desires to work with its faculties, it hinders the work which God is doing in it rather than aids it; whereas aforetime it was quite the contrary. The reason is that, in this state of contemplation, which the soul enters when it forsakes meditation for the state of the proficient, it is God Who is now working in the soul; He binds its interior faculties, and allows it not to cling to the understanding, nor to have delight in the will, nor to reason with the memory. For anything that the soul can do of its own accord at this time serves only, as we

[123] The Active Night (meditation) is described in the previous treatise, the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*: 'The first night or purgation is of the sensual part of the soul, which is treated in the present stanza, and will be treated in the first part of this book. And the second is of the spiritual part; of this speaks the second stanza, which follows; and of this we shall treat likewise, in the second and the third part, with respect to the activity of the soul; and in the fourth part, with respect to its passivity.' (John of the Cross, Ascent of Mount Carmel 1,2) 'This "fourth part" is the *Dark Night*.' (John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul p. ix)

[124] 'It is a vexatious fact about the English language that we use the verb "to think" both for the beliefs or opinions that a man has, and for the pondering and reflecting that a man does; and that we use the noun "thought" both for the truth or falsehood that he accepts, and for the activity of reflecting which, perhaps, preceded his acceptance of it. To think, in the sense of "believe," is not to think, in the sense of "ponder."' (Ryle 269)

[125] 'Religion in so far as it is a source of consolation is a hindrance to true faith: in this sense atheism is a purification. I have to be atheistic with the part of myself which is not made for God. Among those men in whom the supernatural part has not been awakened, the atheists are right and the believers wrong.' (Weil 115)

have said, to hinder inward peace and the work which God is accomplishing in the spirit by means of that aridity of sense.' (John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul 1,9,7)

This passivity reminds us of Alice's episode with the King: inspired writing is that which goes on despite oneself (as in Stevens' poem),[126] just as here divine inspiration is made possible by Weil's emptiness of mind, by vacating 'space' for divine intervention. The work of God takes place on the peak of the mountain, where the view is clear: meditation and the operation of the senses are, for St. John, obstacles for divine interventions because distractions to contemplation, pure attention to God. That the senses and the meditative use of attention constitute a hindrance to divine revelation is grounded on the infinite distance between us and God that gives meaning to the term 'supernatural'.[127] As such, 'a soul must rather proceed by not understanding than by desiring to understand; and by blinding itself and setting itself in darkness, rather than by opening its eyes, in order the more nearly to approach the ray Divine.' (8,6) The description of this difference relies on a changed perception, which is to be read allegorically and negatively: in contemplation we are to 'see' (supernatural) reality by becoming blind to the senses: the external world of sense perception is to be substituted by the internal world of spiritual movements.[128] In contemplation there is thus a detachment of content from form.[129] As in St. Antony, an attachment to language - mediatory representation borne by things, images and words – is to be avoided as an impediment to the true attachment to God.[130] The change in mode of perception requires a different language: this distancing from words is a call toward a different language – the language of the heart.[131] (There is, however, an implicit tension in this contemplative detachment within religious belief itself – iconoclasm -, given Weil's account of the mediating name of the Father.)

The 'language of the heart' is not made out of words but intentions: desire and attitudes stand against the interpretation and reflexivity of meditation. Bossuet, the Bishop of Meaux, called the acts of mystical prayer 'direct and non-reflective acts, which are little if at all understood, practised in the heart and not signified, that is not formulated in the heart in a reflective manner

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[126] The passive element in inspiration is noted by Stevens not only, as we have seen, in the verses 'Where you yourself were not quite yourself, / And did not want nor have to be', but also in the additionally intimated meaning of the 'ruddy temper'-ing of steel, which becomes malleable, in its fabrication, to the force of the blue hammer.

[127] '. . . although it is true that all creatures have, as theologians say, a certain relation to God . . . yet there is no essential resemblance or connection between them and God — on the contrary, the distance between their being and His Divine Being is infinite.' (John of the Cross, Ascent of Mount Carmel 2,8,3)

[128] 'During the time, then, of the aridities of this night of sense (wherein God effects the change of which we have spoken above, drawing forth the life of sense into that of the spirit - that is, *from meditation to contemplation* – wherein it no longer has any power to work or to reason with its faculties concerning the things of God . . . )' (John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul 1,10,1, my italics)

[129] This detachment within language must be related to that of *ataraxia:* of reason in relation to desire, which appears to be the opposite of the language of the heart (Ch.2).

[130] 'Furthermore, they burden themselves with images and rosaries . . . now they want this kind of thing, now that . . . and relics and tokens, like children with trinkets. Here I condemn the attachment of the heart . . . [to] these things . . . For true devotion must issue from the heart, and consist in the truth and substances alone of what is represented by spiritual things; all the rest is affection and attachment proceeding from imperfection; and in order that one may pass to any kind of perfection it is necessary for such desires to be killed.' (John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul 1,3,1)

[131] Speaking of the sin of becoming angry at not finding the desired consolation in spiritual things, St. John sounds very much like Epictetus' admonitions regarding words. 'Many can never have enough of listening to counsels . . . possessing and reading many books which treat of this matter, and they spend their time on all these things rather than on works of mortification and perfecting of the inward poverty of spirit'. (John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul 1,3,1)

and still less outwardly expressed by words, signs or exterior acts.' (Caussade 157-8) To illustrate this language, Caussade compares the supernatural movements of the soul to the natural movements of the senses: 'a soul finds itself in much the same attitude toward God, by a supernatural attraction, as that of any person who loves another by natural attraction when he is thinking of his beloved.' (158) This desire for loving union is the same that St. John depicts in his poem. Bossuet's example is of family love. A mother who loves her child experiences these direct acts, 'which are simple interior movements, of a simple turning of the heart toward the child . . . [simple] for she does not reflect if she loves'. Here there is a description of the turning of attention, namely of contemplative attention, for 'she loves without saying anything, but merely by loving'. (158) The contemplative 'act' of love is where Weil places the paradoxical force of faith, displacing, like Sartre, the focus of the ontological problem from physical existence to existential being.[132] This action may be metaphorical (no action but only intention need be involved in prayer), or literal in the sense that good action, as per the opening quote of Ch.1, is the result of this loving attitude of prayer, a speaking of the language of the heart. But attention and intention are the criteria, not words. As when listening to music, we must not speak.

Learning this language, as we have seen in the Dark Night, is a question of learning to perceive differently: to listen to the inner movements (the attitudes) of the soul. Failing to do so results in the imperceptibility of our inner actions, which is why 'our acts both good and bad often escape our consciousness', (44) often 'by their very simplicity', which is the result of 'our scanty knowledge of the very principle of these spiritual acts, which is our soul.'(45) Again, one learns to pay attention to the soul not by 'acquiring new knowledge, more brilliant light, as one does in reading books or in the study of the humane sciences', but by 'impoverishing oneself'. This aridity of sense St. John also mentions involves the subtraction of enchanting words (*epodai*): 'losing the rich substance of all the beautiful conceptions and words with which [the soul] accompanied her interior acts: she thus learns to speak the language of the heart.' Until one can strip oneself of words, 'one always talks in one's interior a human language, and clothes one's thoughts in the words one would use in explaining oneself to another.' Against this ordinary state of communication, in contemplation 'one learns to speak so much to God that one retains only the language that he alone understands'. This language consists 'above all in the act of love, which neither can nor wishes to explain itself to God except through itself. One tells him of one's love only by loving him, and at that time the heart speaks to God alone.' (45-6) So although 'language of the heart' expresses a speaking without words, the expression needs a grammatical concept of language, of communication, inasmuch as it is prayer, a talking-to.

The concept of talking-to is therefore not literal, but a metaphor that aims to express a grammatical form, the structure of the speech-act that is prayer. Its nonlinguistic particularity stands against the particularity of meditation that is self-reflection (Ch.2).[133] Philips brings out this

[132] 'A case of contradictories which are true. God exists: God does not exist. Where is the problem? I am quite sure that there is a God in the sense that I am quite sure my love is not illusory. I am quite sure that there is not a God in the sense that I am quite sure nothing real can be anything like what I am able to conceive when I pronounce this word. But what which I cannot conceive is not an illusion.' (Weil 114)

[133] '. . . prayer cannot be equated with various forms of self-knowledge, and the ways of acquiring them . . . despite analogies and similarities of varying degrees, prayer remains a talk addressed to God, and cannot be explained as a dialogue of the soul with itself.' (Phillips, The concept of prayer 64)

opposition by contrasting the attempts of an atheist and a believer to make sense out of a difficult period in life by expressing their shame and confessing their faults (respectively, in a monologue, and to God). 'What Temple [the atheist] needed was to put her story into words, into an articulate form; to see the bearing which one event in her life had had on another.' Temple admits her sins in order to meditate upon her life and make sense of it, interpret it. But this is not what confession is like for religious believers. 'If it were, reference to God would be superfluous. Temple is able to find out her salvation for herself. The believer finds the meaning of life in the worship of God. He does not, indeed, cannot, work it out for himself.' (66) The kind of 'knowledge' involved is not a case of words, but a concern, despair even with one's moral form in the sense of moral limitations, imperfection. This anxious care - about a certain aspect of one's life, in this case moral – constitutes a seriousness. 'Moral seriousness demands that men recognize their moral limitations . . . This knowledge of the kind of person one is, or is becoming, can lead to despair.' Prayer is a counteraction to that despair – one sustained on pure hope: not 'hope for anything, moral improvement for example, since he has already recognized that there is no hope of that', it is 'simply hope, hope in the sense of the ability to live with himself. But this ability itself is not the result of endeavour, but of contemplation.' (67)

'What the believer contemplates is not how he is' – this would be meditating – but 'the fact that he is.' (67, my italics) Here we come up against the limits, against necessity, against what Socrates will call in the *Charmides* knowledge-that (precisely because the ability to recognize our limits is what he also there calls the knowledge of ignorance). 'The recognition of his limitations as a person, for the believer, is closely related to seeing life as a gift, seeing his life as "given". "The given" includes both the good and the evil in his life, and it is to this whole life that love of God brings salvation from despair.' (67) God is not merely relevant in a unilateral sense of positive moral therapy, but also as an acceptance of our failures: 'If God were only relevant to the good in a man's life, He could not bring hope or salvation to it.' (67)

Hope and salvation are attitudes governing the whole sum of one's life: it is a holistic grasping of the moral aspect of a particular life. Bossuet, on the other hand, underlines the meditative investigation that is required for such an attitude to exist in the first place. Confession is the rite or prayer that formalizes the desire for redemption, based on a perception of negative contrast: the measure of our goodness is taken by the extent of our evil. As we shall discuss further, the form of this moral contrast is ametrically measured in *shame*. Whereas it is extremely 'difficult to understand the goodness of those direct acts which are a simple deliberate movement toward good . . . simple movements of heart toward evil are much more easily perceived'. (161) Experienced confessors do not thereby ask us about our good intentions and acts, but 'bring us back always to direct acts of the heart and tell us: "Sound your heart well: is this its true and actual inclination?"" Confession reveals the easiness with which we can lie to ourselves by repeating words that we do not mean.[134] The failure to match the 'form' of words with the 'content' of

[134] Bossuet makes a sharp distinction between doctrinarian, textbook confession and confession of the heart, which also bears on the distinction between the content and use of *epodai*, i.e. how prayer can also be fancy. 'It is easy to explain those acts which Christians are commanded to make, and the best way of carrying them out. Of all these acts the grossest are those which reduce to a formula and which one carries out according to the instructions in books, under such titles as *acts of contrition, acts of petition*, etc. These acts are very imperfect, and are often merely an amusement of our imagination without anything of them entering into the heart.' He continues to explain their utility for beginners, demonstrating how there is a temporally

attitudes is what constitutes, for Bossuet, the failure of prayer as a meaningful language. It is a fear of an incapacity for meaningful reading that leads to the iconoclastic rejection of words. But an insistence on the silence of contemplation against the discursiveness of meditation is itself to misunderstand the role of the intelligence in spiritual discipline (Ch.2).

Yet a skeptical approach to the pleasures of charming words can be the right attitude at times, namely as a defense of the grammar of moral redemption against self-deception. This is why it is aridity and not spiritual pleasure or the intellectual consolations awarded by meditation that are to be expected in the dark night.[135] Aridity is a requirement of therapeutic purgation because 'the soul that is given to sweetness naturally has its face set against all self-denial, which is devoid of sweetness.'[136] (1,6,7) St. John's aridity is the equivalent of Weil's affliction.[137] A form of purification, spiritual therapy is likened to dieting[138] and to a fire that is to burn into our very core.[139] The roots - the very center - of the soul is where God is supposed to live.[140] The names of the agents (the self – God) are confused because in contemplation subject and object are fused, welded in the fire that is the element relating steel and hammer. They are fused in ineffable desire, which implies a change – a purification - in the form of desire itself: this is the aridity of *metanoia*: a change in the common – natural – form of desire.[141] McCabe goes on to say that 'it is God who prays. Not just God who answers prayer but God who prays in us in the first place. In prayer we become the locus of the divine dialogue between Father and Son, we are in Spirit and truth.' (71)

By definition, in grace all action is good because it follows from God. The purpose of setting up *metanoia* as therapy is to establish a (narrow)[142] path for desire within the afflictive locus of the divine dialogue.[143] Attention can be maintained because love can sustain pain.[144] Although in

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progressive link between meditation and contemplation. 'They have, however, their utility for those who are only beginning to love God: they are a mere outer skin, it is true, but through this skin the good sap runs out . . . one progresses gradually from them to acts of the heart.' (49, ft1)

[135] 'Such persons expend all their effort in seeking spiritual effort and consolation; they never tire therefore, of reading books; and they begin, now one meditation, now another, in their pursuit of this pleasure which they desire to experience in the things of God.' (1,6,6)

[136] Here we can find the attitudinal justification for Wittgenstein's 'Nothing is so difficult as not deceiving yourself.' (Wittgenstein CV 39e)

[137] 'Affliction makes God appear to be absent for a time, more absent than a dead man, more absent then light in the utter darkness of a cell. A kind of horror submerges the whole soul. What is terrible is that if, in this darkness where there is nothing to love, the soul ceases to love, God's absence becomes final. The soul has to go on loving in the emptiness, or at least to go on wanting to love, though it may only be with an infinitesimal part of itself. Then, one day, God will come to show himself to this soul and to reveal the beauty of the world to it, as in the case of Job. But if the soul stops loving it falls, even in this life, into something almost equivalent to hell' (Weil 70)

[138] 'For this soul is now, as it were, undergoing a cure, in order that it may regain its health – its health being God itself. His Majesty restricts it to a diet and abstinence from all things, and takes away its appetite for them all.' (2,6,10)

[139] '. . . He is purging the soul, annihilating it, emptying it or consuming in it (even as fire consumes the mouldiness and the rust of metal) all the affections and imperfect habits which it has contracted in its whole life. Since these are deeply rooted in the substance of the soul, it is wont to suffer great undoings and inward torment'. (John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul 2,6,5)

[140] 'Grace is not something that comes at me from outside to constrain my freedom, it is a depth within me more central to me than what I call my self.' (McCabe 71)

[141] 'We have to go down to the root of our desires in order to tear the energy from its object. That is where the desires are true in so far as they are energy. It is the object which is unreal. But there is an unspeakable wrench in the soul at the separation of a desire from its object.' (Weil 22)

[142] '. . . small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.' (Matthew 7:14)

[143] 'Affliction is a marvel of divine technique.' Like a hammer, it 'is a simple and ingenious device which introduces into the soul of a finite creature the immensity of force, blind, brutal, and cold. The infinite distance separating God from the creature is entirely concentrated into one point to pierce the soul in its center.' (Weil 81)

philosophy contemplative detachment will be sided with reason (Ch.2), in religion it relates to love through assent to a direction within this center.[145] What sustains the operation of faith in the face of existential despair (and inspiration against meaninglessness) is precisely the teleological structure afforded to attention: 'It is only necessary to know that love is a direction and not a state of the soul. If one is unaware of this, one falls into despair at the first onslaught of affliction.' (Weil 81) As we shall see, the same teleological element justifies Heidegger's role of the poet as an answer to a calling from the being of beings (Ch.4). Allegories of inspiration partly rely on 'attention' and 'perception' due to this element of directedness that surges because there is more than one element in play, and thus a relatedness between beings. For full attention to comprehend the 'other' being, the 'I' must disappear. The role of Weil's decreation is to passively - by assent and not by the effort of will - vacate 'space' for the process of contemplation.[146] But if the 'other' (the 'object') is intrinsic to the center of the self, then this final inseparability (final because ineffably inconceivable) means that all that is left is the relational element of 'attention' itself – or, in its metaphorical expression, 'light'. The joy of revelation that is the final point of the journey of affliction is the meeting of two loves: that of the will and the understanding.[147] But this love that is a form of knowledge can only come to pass after the afflictive purge of fire has decreated the assenting self.[148] The soul is touched by the divine presence because desire has become an understanding: the desire has been purged of all sensorial, and so the will purified but not destroyed.[149] Therapy reaching its conclusion, God has by this point made the soul 'die to all that is not naturally God' and 'thus its youth is renewed like the eagle's and it is clothed with the new man', the divine man, which 'is naught else but His illumination of the understanding with supernatural light'. (2,13,11)

In the religious tradition of contemplation, *metanoia* is this coming of light that is purified understanding: the sound mind that is *nous*. In an Aristotelian picture (Ch.3), St. John tells us that the light of grace can only enter into a hollow, and is not related to particulars but the universality of understanding.[150] Attention and light stand as educational pictures due to a shift in mode of

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[144] 'But through all the horror he can continue to want to love. There is nothing impossible in that, no obstacle, one might almost say no difficulty.' (Weil 81)

[145] 'For the greatest suffering, so long as it does not cause the soul to faint, does not touch the acquiescent part of the soul, consenting to a right direction.' (Weil 81)

[146] 'Attention is bound up with desire. Not the will but with desire – or more exactly, consent . . . Attention alone – that attention which is so full that the "I" disappears – is required of me. I have to deprive all that I call "I" of the light of my attention and turn it on that which cannot be conceived.' (118)

[147] 'This enkindling and yearning of love are not always perceived by the soul. For in the beginning, when this spiritual purgation commences, all this Divine fire is used in drying up and making ready the wood (which is the soul) rather than in giving it heat. But, as time goes on, the fire begins to give heat to the soul, and the soul then very commonly feels this enkindling and heat of love. Further, as the understanding is being more and more purged by means of this darkness, it sometimes comes to pass that this mystical and loving theology, as well as enkindling the will, strikes and illumines the other faculty also—that of the understanding—with a certain Divine light and knowledge, so delectably and delicately that it aids the will to conceive a marvellous fervour, and, without any action of its own, there burns in it this Divine fire of love, in living flames, so that it now appears to the soul a living fire by reason of the living understanding which is given to it.' (John of the Cross 2,12,5)

[148] '. . . the receptive passion of the understanding can receive intelligence only in a detached and passive way (and this is impossible without its having been purged)'. (John of the Cross 2,13,3)

[149] Until this mystical state is attained, 'the soul feels the touch of intelligence less frequently than that of the passion of love. For it is not necessary to this end that the will should be so completely purged with respect to the passions, since these very passions help it to feel impassioned love.' (John of the Cross 2,13,3)

[150] 'This light can penetrate the deepest secrets because 'it is not restricted to any particular object of the intellect or affection. And this is the characteristic of the spirit that is purged and annihilated with respect to all particular affections and objects of

perception: it does not transcend beings, but sees them under a different light. As McCabe shows, nothing changes in the world, unless as an effect of the alteration of my perception:

> '. . . when God makes it that the fine day shall really be an answer to my prayer, and when God makes it that bread and wine should really be the body and blood of Christ by involving it in the prayer of the whole Church, in both cases he is revealing himself, making us see (in faith of course) the meaning of his love. "In faith of course" because the bystander will not see the bread and wine as the body of Christ.' (McCabe 73)

Roquentin does not 'see' – intuit, feel the presence of - Christ as Weil does, but the 'beauty' of the tune. Yet the joy felt may very well be the same, and the sort of presence dressed with a different robe: 'Christ' may just stand for many of the senses expressed in 'beauty'. Mysticism, due to its rapport with ineffability, is easily mistaken for a state where anything can mean everything (Ch.2). Yet love is not a state, and if religious, St. John has told us, mysticism is a love. Weil describes contemplation as a waiting. But this is not 'akin to waiting at a telephone in the hope that someone will call . . . This would place the waiting she speaks of in a vacuum, whereas in fact it is a religious activity.' (Phillips 155) Weil's 'vision' of Christ as a result of the inspired reading of a poem does not mean that she saw a person, but that her sense of presence is to be understood from within a given religious tradition, which in turn is described by certain allegories.151 Waiting refers to the 'kind of prayer which is based on the belief that in specific situations one cannot work out by reason what is and what is not the will of God.' (155) That mystical contemplation is a waiting and a desire for ineffable presence already tells us that this sort of knowledge relates to the limits of knowledge.[152]

## Abstraction in Writing

In literature, the limits of knowledge are linguistically conveyed by the technique of abstraction. In order to explain allegorical usage, Erich Auerbach compares two different types of texts - Homer's *The Odyssey* and the episode of Abraham and Isaac in the Old Testament.[153] The Odyssey, like a straightforward adventure movie, does not seem to require any additional information to be understood, it is 'all outside', "foreground", as Auerbach calls it.[154] What matters

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the understanding, that in this state wherein it has pleasure in nothing and understands nothing in particular, but dwells in its emptiness, darkness and obscurity, it is fully prepared to embrace everything to the end that those words of Saint Paul may be fulfilled in it: *Nihil habentes, et omnia possidentes.* (2 Corinthians vi, 10.) For such poverty of spirit as this would deserve such happiness.' (John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul 2,8,5)

[151] 'After all, why is it that no one would deny that Simone Weil was a deeply religious woman, if not because of the relation of what she was, said and did, to profound religious beliefs held in various religious communities. So although persons like Simone Weil might say that they knew the will of God when they felt compelled to act in a certain way, their criteria, logically speaking, are not private, but owe their very possibility to existing beliefs about God.' (Phillips 156)

[152] In this sense, metaphysics is the negative contour of Dasein: but as a philosophical investigation, a discursive and rational (meditative) reflection, it can only fail to produce a propositionally defined object. This is what sets the difference between early and later Heidegger (see Intro., Rorty).

[153] 'It would be difficult, then, to imagine styles more contrasted than those of these two equally ancient and equally epic texts.' (Auerbach 11)

[154] Homer depicts 'externalized, uniformly illuminated phenomena, at a definite time and in a definite place, connected together without lacunae in a perpetual foreground; thoughts and feeling completely expressed; events taking place in leisurely fashion and with very little of suspense.' (11)

is the plot: what happens carries us along. This style of writing has a very important repercussion: 'The Homeric poems conceal nothing, they contain no teaching and no secret meaning. Homer can be analyzed, as we have essayed to do here, but he cannot be interpreted.' (11) This could not be more distant from what is required in the reading of poems, which call on us to interpret what they are about. This is provoked by abstraction, the concealment of elements.

> 'On the other hand, the externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else left in obscurity; the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is nonexistent; time and place are undefined and call for interpretation; thoughts and feelings remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and the fragmentary speeches; the whole, permeated with the most unrelieved suspense and directed toward a single goal (and to that extent far more of a unity), remains mysterious and 'fraught with background'. (11)

Whereas Homer is basically 'foreground', here we are talking essentially of 'background' - a negatively projected space caused by missing elements -, where we are forced to imagine what happens behind the curtain of abstraction. Yet this is based on the presupposition that the author knows everything that happens (as he who asks a riddle is supposed to know the answer), while this need not be the case. In assuming the author is omniscient of what occurs in the 'life' of its characters, we confuse fiction with reality. Characters only live in those particular words, what survived from whichever various ideas the author imagined. This again comes back to the distinction between an attention to the how of language in poetry over a what: often no theme or event is depicted. The following poem, by John Ashbery, is a good example of an abstract poem: although we know it is about 'poetry', we do not know what poetry is about: there is no reply to the fuzzy question.

"What is poetry" by John Ashbery

The medieval town, with frieze
Of boy scouts from Nagoya? The snow
That came when we wanted it to snow?
Beautiful images? Trying to avoid
Ideas, as in this poem? But we
Go back to them as to a wife, leaving
The mistress we desire? Now they
Will have to believe it
As we believed it. In school
All the thought got combed out:
What was left was like a field.
Shut your eyes, and you can feel it for miles around.
Now open them on a thin vertical path.
It might give us--what?—some flowers soon?

In this parody of inspiration, words prompt reactions from us to what appears to be a thematic question. But if we pay attention to how the 'question' is put, we notice it has the formal appearance of a statement (there is no question mark). In this case, it is the logical form of the

poem itself that intimates what the nature of poetry might be: a question that states (an inexpressible expression). The first couplets, however, are marked by questions. In these couplets there is indefiniteness as to what poetry may be, as we move through the possibilities suggested in the couplets, firstly: a rather surrealist aggrupation of images. In an interview, Ashbery relates his desire to 'avoid / Ideas' to playful free-association, an attempt to escape the contemplative attention of the hammer.[155] In other words, sometimes suggestion may just be pure suggestion, not an intimation of some specific idea. They may not mean anything in particular. The desire for closure Auerbach implies in 'background' is what makes us stitch fragments together: interpretation thinks by establishing propositional connections.[156] We are pushed into the position of trying to make sense out of ambiguity and abstraction when we are given less than what we need to make sense out of a given context. Mystery and interpretation are effects of lacking information: of absence. The absence of God as an explanatory cause is in this sense formally mimicked by abstract poems, which intimate meanings we need to relate, in order to arrive at a fuller picture.[157]

Although ideas are not the starting point of the poem (it begins with fragmented impressions, like the half dead things that become quarter-things in Stevens' poem) we keep questioning whether to go back to them: a tension between love and moral obligation (the wife) and lust (the mistress). Just as St. John made a distinction between love of the will and the understanding, ideas are opposed to the senses - and thus sensorial pleasure. The seriousness that attaches itself to ideas seems to serve, Ashbery goes on, as evidence (now they will have) to believe it: but we are not told who is to believe in what. 'We', us, readers of poems, we are told that we no longer believe it. Since the poet includes himself in this group of skeptics, and given the way the poem ends, mocking an expectation that flowers might fall from above if we keep our eyes firmly raised 'on a thin vertical path', it is surely inspiration we have ceased to believe in; or at least its verticality, the sense of transcendence. But the satire against belief can be inversed: the object may well be the believer and not the 'object'. At the beginning of the poem, the divinatory science of making *it* snow is mocked. The 'it' here does not have to mean God or a god. Indeed it does not have to mean *anything* - it is merely a grammatical fill, as when we say 'It snows.' What matters here is that someone may have the delusion to believe so; or even the power to make other do so, and that this is somehow related to 'what is poetry'.

[155] 'When one goes at ideas directly, with hammer and tongs as it were, ideas tend to elude one in a poem. I think they only come back in when one pretends not to be paying any attention to them, like a cat that will rub against your leg.' (Ashbery)
[156] 'So those things got connected just because of one's automatic temptation to connect something with something else.' (Ashbery)
[157] Under the heading "The Biblical Picture of Human Life", Bouwsma says: 'In the center of that picture is the figure of man. Let that represent a man's life. Surrounding spaces must be filled in. (…) But in the picture that we are given in this case, there are details that no man could possibly have been acquainted with. Man's life, as we know it, once we are given the picture, is like a part of a picture torn out of the whole picture. Given such a part, it is obvious that artists might go about providing surroundings for that part in ever so many ways.' (159)

# Chapter 2 – Attention & Discipline

## *Prosoche & Procheiron*

St. Basil serves as a good example of how Stoic philosophy, usually regarded as the prime example of logocentrism, found its continuity in Christianity. If our minds were 'bared for all to see', he says, 'we might disclose the counsels of our hearts to one another' just by thinking, 'bringing them forth from the secret recesses of the heart'. However, because we are minds in bodies, we are barred from telepathy, 'direct and immediate contact with each other', and thus 'nouns and verbs are needed to make known the secrets of the mind', since the mind 'carries on its processes of thought beneath a covering of flesh'. (431) This is the tradition of 'mind' within which Descartes describes his purportedly 'new', rational 'mind': there is a *res cogitans*, a thinking-thing of divine making.[158] So 'mind' presupposes a split: an inner content for the outer body, just as words are taken to be form and content: a conventional inscription refers to/expresses/communicates an intended meaning. This parallelism, where words communicate minds, can be seen in St. Basil, to whom the mind is what provides words with mental contents, so that a thought can become a 'meaningful utterance' and be communicated.[159] The meaningfulness of words, regarded as the secret property of truth, can only be perceived/revealed/disclosed/brought out from the 'recesses' through attention: 'The word of truth is hard to catch and it can easily elude the inattentive listener.' (431)

St. Basil's maxim, which stipulates a relation between truth (understood as St. John's language of the heart) and attention, is followed by a stylistic restriction: 'For this reason, the Holy Spirit wills that our words be concise and brief so as to express much in little and by condensation to make what is said easy to retain in the memory.' (431-2) Simone Weil (like St. Antony) sides with (the Holy Spirit's calling for) simplicity of style: truth should not risk being veiled by mannerisms. The way to keep truth ready at hand is to be able to instantly recall its precepts in case of moral danger. The retention in memory of meaningful words sustains the Stoic practice of attention (*procheiron*) of keeping moral precepts handy (ready to recite), as a means of keeping vigil on the purity of the heart, which finds its attentional counterpart in the long-standing Christian tradition of *garde du coeur*.[160] The words that have the power to keep us on the right track require much attention because we are so easily distracted.[161] In the spiritual tradition attention is a question of moral survival, of self-rescue from ignominy: of being unworthy of *bearing the name*, the category

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[158] Heidegger criticizes Descartes for continuing to presuppose that mind is *a* being [*Seiende*] before asking what 'being' is: 'With the *"cogito sum"* Descartes claims to prepare a new and secure foundation for philosophy. But what he leaves undetermined in this "radical" beginning is the manner of being of the *res cogitans*, more precisely *the meaning of being of the "sum"* . . . Descartes carried out the fundamental reflections of his *Meditations* by applying medieval ontology to this being [*Seiende*] which he posits as the *fundamentum inconcussum* [unshakable foundation].The *res cogitans* is ontologically determined as *ens,* and for medieval ontology the meaning of the being of the *ens* is established in the understanding of it as *ens creatum.* As the *ens inifinitum* God is the *ens increatum.* But createdness, in the broadest sense of something having been produced, is an essential structural moment of the ancient concept of being.' (H24)

[159] 'As soon, therefore, as our mental faculty frames a meaningful utterance, it is conveyed by words, as by a ferry, and flying through the air, it passes from the speaker to the auditor.' (431)

[160] 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the outflowings of life.' (Proverbs 4:23)

[161] 'We men are easily prone to sins of thought.' (Basil 432)

'human'.[162] Attention gains a moral goal and method: to keep our intentions pure, it must keep sinful thoughts at bay. Christian *garde du coeur* is an extension of Stoic attention (*prosoche*): an ethics hinged on the vigilance of impressions.[163] The wordiness St. Basil wants to excise from his ideal, depurated style[164] is a distraction that can easily lead to sinful behavior, and as such needs the 'precautionary measures' of 'the more provident physicians'. As for the Stoics, attention is meant to thwart moral dangers by fortifying virtue. This therapy is effected by a series of countermeasures against the imagination, the foe of moral reasoning, in order to maintain the balance of virtue. Although a haughty man, St. Basil reminds us, may wear 'the appearance of sobriety,' he may have 'run off in his thoughts, by a secret movement of the heart to a place of sin.' (432) The image St. Basil gives for this secret locus of intention is, interestingly, like an artist's workshop, where images are crafted for the purpose of yielding imaginative pleasure.[165] This is language too – of the heart, of intention - but defiled. Yet the criterion for recognizing a thought as sinful is that someone (natural or supernatural) witnesses it as such: which is why attention is posited as a form of moral perception.[166] The contemplative gaze the Christian directs to God is, in the tradition of *prosoche*, directed inwards toward the self, at distinguishing the intention of the heart;[167] or, as the Stoics would say, correctly discerning the impressions of the soul. Moral perception is built on an analogy with an attention to fine differences, a perception of details, nuances.[168] Although St. Basil's metaphor for attention is perceptive, it is reduced to its conceptual aspect: attention to the self is a mental action (*noiesis*) against distractions.[169]

Plutarch, in line with the holism of the spiritual tradition, regarded medicine and philosophy as belonging to 'a single field.'[170] Foucault identifies '*pathos*' as the central element

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[162] The rationalist tradition defines man by contrast to the animal. In St. Basil: 'Every animal has been endowed by God, the Creator of all things, with an interior power of self-protection . . . Moreover, in obeying this precept, we become vigilant custodians of the resources God has bestowed on us, avoiding sin as the beasts shun noxious foods and following after justice as they seek for pasturage.' (433) In Epictetus: 'what counts as good and bad for man can be found precisely in those respects in which he differs from the beasts. If his special qualities are kept safe behind stout walls, and he does not lose his honour, trustworthiness or intelligence, then the man is saved. But lose or take away any of these qualities and the man himself is lost.' (1,28,21) This contrast is acutely evident in Descartes, reputed for his cruelty toward animals.

[163] 'Attention (*prosoche*) is the fundamental Stoic spiritual attitude. It is a constant vigilance and presence of mind, self consciousness which never sleeps, and a constant tension of the spirit.' (Hadot PWL 84)

[164] 'It is the natural function of speech neither to veil its meaning with obscurity nor to flow aimlessly about the subject in a wordy and inept manner.' (432)

[165] 'In imagination, he beholds the objects of his desire; he fashions the image of some shameful rendezvous entirely within the secret workshop of his heart and within himself he draws vivid pictures of sensual pleasure.' (432-3)

[166] 'He has, unwitnessed, committed a secret sin, which will remain unknown to all until the coming of Him who will reveal the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts.' Epictetus says, 'Philosophers say that the first thing to learn is that God exists, that he governs the world, and that we cannot keep our actions secret, that even our thoughts and inclinations are known to him.' (2,14,11)

[167] '"Give heed to thyself" that you may be able to distinguish between the injurious and the salutary.' (Basil 433-4)

[168] '. . . the first and most important duty of the philosopher is to test impressions, choosing between them and only deploying those that have passed the test. You know how, with money - an area where we believe our interest to be much at stake - we have developed the art of assaying, and considerable ingenuity has gone into developing a way to test if coins are counterfeit, involving our senses of sight, smell, hearing and touch. The assayer will let the denarius drop and listen intently to its ring; and he is not satisfied to listen just once; after repeated listenings he practically acquires a musician's subtle ear'. (Epictetus 1,20,7-9)

[169] 'Now, inasmuch as the faculty of attention has a double aspect – referring, in one sense, to an absorption in visible objects and, in another sense, to an intellectual gaze at incorporeal realities . . . The eye does not apply its power of sight to itself . . . It remains, therefore, to interpret the precept as referring to a mental action. "Give heed to thyself" – that is, examine yourself from all angles. Keep the eye of your soul sleeplessly on guard, for "Thou art going in the midst of snares."' (434)

[170] '. . . the charge of trespass ought not to lie against philosophers if they discuss matters of health, but rather they should be blamed if they do not consider it their duty to abolish all boundary-lines altogether, and to make a single field, as it were, of all honourable studies' (Plutarch 122e)

unifying these fields.[171] Sound-mindedness was regarded as the characteristic of the *sophron*, the wise man who possessed *sophrosyne* (Ch.4), the virtue of balancing the passions: an image succinctly captured in Aristotle's maxim of *in medio virtus*.

> 'For men are good in but one way, but bad in many. Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect . . . virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate.' (1006b)

The Stoics' insistence on discernment underlines this quest for a persistent measuring, a calibration of virtue, moral equipoise. Yet *pathos* - the most visible dimension in the Passion of the Christ - was not only regarded as an emotional unbalance for the ancient therapists: it could also constitute a logical error, or disobedience to reason.[172] Neither was the source of the unbalance understood as proceeding exclusively from the body, as opposed to the truthful mind that is the home of reason.[173] The soul can very well be usurped by fantasies created by the mind – i.e. language, that which, according to St. Basil, conveys mind.[174] In other words, from this point of view, the religious - or properly, ascetic - argument of the body as a source of temptation is completely reversed: the body naturally knows its limits[175] – it is our irrational desire for externals (things we believe we should possess) that may drive us against the boundaries of our natural necessities.[176] Thus the ascetic idea that the self must refrain from following the power of images: in one word, the imagination (Ch.3).

St. Basil's argument against distractions regards false expectations.[177] In the Stoic tradition, shortly put, 'day-dreaming is a malady . . . in order to restrain, as with a bridle, this mental flightiness, this swelling conceit of thought, the Scripture bids us obey that great and wise precept: "Give heed to thyself."' The vigilance of expectations is the logical extension of the Stoic opposition between illusion and necessity, the ideal and the actual. As St. Basil concludes, 'Do not promise yourself non-existent possessions, but administer to advantage the things that are yours.'

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[171] 'It applies to passion as well as physical illness, to the distress of the body and to the involuntary movement of the soul; and in both cases alike, it refers to a state of passivity, which for the body takes the form of a disorder that upsets the balance of its humors and qualities and which for the soul takes the form of a movement capable of carrying it away in spite of itself.' (54)
[172] Foucault says that 'a physician like Galen considers it within his competence not only to cure the great aberrations of the mind (love madness was traditionally within the purview of medicine) but to treat the passions . . . and the errors' (55-56) Galen makes a distinction between the two sources of illness, 'error arises from a false opinion, but passion from an irrational power within us which refuses to obey reason (Galen I,1).
[173] '. . . desire is twofold: it appears in the body and it appears in the soul. The problem of regimen consists in bringing about an exact correlation of the two manifestations.' (The Care of the Self 134)
[174] 'The soul, instead of attending only to the wants and needs of the body, allows itself to be enticed by representations that are peculiar to it and have no counterpart in the organism: representations that are vain and empty.' (The Care of the Self 135)
[175] Recall that St. Basil defended the faculty of attention as a natural gift: 'brute beasts have an instinctive aversion for what would be harmful to them.' (Ascetical Works 433)
[176] The Platonic dualism of body and soul and the sway between passions and reason that Galen reproduces is holistically flattened by Chrysippus. 'On the parts-of-the-soul view, conflict is viewed as a struggle between two forces . . . Reason leads this way, desire pushes that way . . . Chrysippus would urge us, instead, to regard the conflict as an oscillation of the whole soul between recognition and denial.' (Nussbaum TD 383) Chrysippus was the Stoic that most systematized Zeno's ideas and, having given birth to Stoic logic, was probably Epictetus' most significant influence. For Chrysippus, since we are by definition rational beings, this struggle becomes an oscillation within reason itself.
[177] 'They promise themselves fame, a brilliant marriage . . . universal esteem. Then, despite the fact that there is no foundation for such hopes, their minds swell nigh to bursting with dreams of achievements which men regard as supreme.' (Basil 439)

(439) Weil, also a Stoic in most regards, is adamant in her pursuit for realism.[178] In this sense, realism is a curtailing of the possibilities of the self from fantasy, an attempt to safeguard facticity from the ideality of the imagination. We are typically blind to our own wrong opinions, unless they come in the form of pain, of suffering;[179] the moral form of which is shame. Shame is symptomatic of an awareness of inner error, moral unbalance – the problem is that we are blind to it if our character, our heart, our intentions are impure.[180] In summary, Stoicism is a training in realism: *prosoche* the perceptive means of attitudinal vigilance and *procheiron* the written means, the standards that in turn inform and train *prosoche*. *Procheiron* are reminders for the eyes to take off their glasses; and require a prior understanding of what having glasses on feels like. In Stoicism there is no external point of communication yet, no God to talk to - *logos* speaks to and for us from the depth of our true self: what we need to do, as moral selves, is to learn to listen to our own 'true' thoughts: our 'conscience'.

## Distractions

Barthes' reading of Loyola's *Exercises* presents us with the positive role of language in divinatory communication, although in an inverted role: the particular language Barthes claims Loyola (a creator of language, a 'Logothete') has created serves not for ordinary communication (a code of signs to be deciphered) but 'for deciphering (the will of God).' (48) Barthes counts four operations that assist Loyola in his pursuit of this disclosure; what Barthes describes is Loyola's investigative method (of the will of God), which is based upon the creation of a language. As a means to oracular attention, these operations partake in the process *(lysis)* of thinking that is meditation proper, that the Stoics formalized in *procheiron*. The first operation is self-isolation, which is equivalent to the negative role of *prosoche* regarding distractions: the subtraction of all perceptive activity (namely linguistic)[181] to prepare for the institution of the new language. This state of quiet *(ataraxia)* - amounts to making a *tabula rasa* out of *nous*, so that a new language may take place.

Attention is essentially focus, which implies a negative space, exclusion. This is what happens when we point out things.[182] Something artworks must do in order to survive, come into

[178] 'Necessity is essentially a stranger to the imaginary.' (Gravity and Grace 53)
[179] '. . . we see injury only where physical or financial loss is incurred, whereas if the loss stems from our own choices, then we don't suspect any harm has been done. After all, we don't get a headache after an error in judgement or an act of injustice.' (Discourses 2,10,19-28)
[180] 'Evil dwells in the heart of the criminal without being felt there. It is felt in the heart of the man who is afflicted and innocent.' (Weil, Waiting for God 70)
[181] 'The new language must arise from a material vacuum; an anterior space must separate it from the other common, idle, outmoded language, whose "noise" might hinder it: no interference of signs; in elaborating the language in which the exercitant can interrogate the Divinity, Loyola requires retreat: no sound, little light, solitude'. (Barthes 4)
[182] Heidegger notes this the use of statements as determination, which 'does not first discover, but as a mode of pointing out initially *limits* seeing precisely to what shows itself . . . as such, in order to manifest *explicitly* what is manifest in its determinacy through the explicit *limitation* of looking.' (H 155)

being, is capture the audience's interest, our desire to focus - to the exclusion of all other factors.[183] In phenomenological terms, this comes down to saying that whatever falls outside the scope of my attention does not exist for me.[184] This is simultaneously the danger of fancy. Morality amounts to the 'rational' will to exclude the (passional) elements that will lend to loss of attentional control.[185] But there must also be critical vigilance as a defense against bad art, or else our interest may be captured by the sheer novelty of things. 'The natural tendency of attention when left to itself is to wander to ever new things; and so soon as the interest of its object is over, so soon as nothing new is to be noticed there, it passes, in spite of our will, to something else.' (James PP 1:422) This is a succinct description of what Heidegger calls curiosity.

Like the public version of Heideggerian distractions that is idle talk - which 'says what one is to have read and seen', whereby we can understand the They (the public opinion we run the danger of falling into to the loss of our own) as an authoritative critic – curiosity sees 'not in order to understand what it sees, that is, to come to a being toward it, but only in order to see. It seeks novelty only to leap from it again to another novelty.' (H172) This failure to understand (which here clearly means to participate in the being of the thing perceived) is a not-staying, an impulsive reactivity to further novelty whatsoever that pulls attention away from a being, in its search for 'excitement'. The They know the latest thing, and then hop to another tomorrow. 'In not-staying, curiosity makes sure of the constant possibility of distraction. Curiosity has nothing to do with the contemplation that wonders at being, *thaumazein*, it has no interest in wondering to the point of not understanding. Rather, it makes sure of knowing, but in order to have known.' (H172) Yet the essential character of curiosity, its ontological condition, is that it is a 'tendency toward "seeing" . . . a peculiar way of letting the world be encountered in perception.' (H170) This is the wrong kind of contemplation, the 'easy' mysticism we shall next see in the Quietists. It thrives on the interest James founds attention on, an Aristotelian "desire to see", which is, Heidegger continues, essentially a desire for truth: 'Being is what shows itself in pure, intuitive perception, and only this seeing discovers being. Primordial and genuine truth lies in pure intuition. This thesis henceforth remains the foundation of Western philosophy.' The danger of this just-perceiving (which has its element of truth) is that curiosity becomes 'free' from circumspection, that is, the kind of care that is involved in work,[186] of bringing beings closer to hand; and in this distracted freedom, takes care only to the 'outward appearance' of the world. As such, an essential characteristic of distracted curiosity is that of 'never dwelling anywhere' – 'it constantly uproots itself.' (H173) This thought links directly to later Heidegger, for whom intimacy with the world is building a dwelling, harnessed by attention to innerworldly beings.[187] There is no circumspect world in the mode of distraction: things are merely their outer appearance, true thingness remains hidden: the same

[183] 'Millions of items of the outward order are present to my senses which never properly enter into my experience. Why? Because they have no interest for me. My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice shape my mind - without selective interest, experience is an utter chaos.' (James PP 1: 402)
[184] This is the basis of idealism: that mind comes first. Here we can see how it is language that makes reality come to life: it is by communicating that we know that others see the same; yet in turn means that 'mind' only exists in a shared world.
[185] '. . . to every man actuated by passion the thought of interests which negate the passion can hardly for more than a fleeting instant stay before the mind' (James, The Principles of Psychology 1:421)
[186] The 'circumspect discovery of the work-world has the character of being of de-distancing' (H173)
[187] This attention does not hop about. 'To dwell . . . means to remain at peace within . . . the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature . . . human being consists in dwelling . . . in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth.' (Heidegger BDT 149)

occlusive phenomenon affects beings in general as it does the 'false' self. This is the sense in which the Stoics wish to intimately participate in the world.[188] The danger of art is only a problem when the distracted follow the tendencies of the distractors and the distracted.[189] Thus the 'care for seeing is essential to the being of human being.' (H171)

In the spiritual tradition, distraction is known as reactive or passive attention, as opposed to nonreactive - i.e. ataraxic. In the latter case, one takes control of one's mental perception. It is because our everyday condition (in Heideggerian terms, our entanglement [*Verfallen*]) is that of reactive attention, that attention must be trained.[190] 'No one attains attentive equipoise for the mere wishing, and the problem arises regarding what is to be done when distractions occur.' There are 'only two choices', and the spiritual alternative is not 'to react with frustration and judgment' but 'simply to observe the distraction nonreactively, to note it, accept it, and then gently bring the mind back to its concentrated mode.' (Novak 606) My key interest in distraction and *ataraxia* is that a tendency toward reactive attention means failure in close reading.

> 'Take, for example, the act in which the reader is currently engaged. . . . these words are doing the discursing for the reader's attention, leading it from place to place. Moreover, it is highly likely that, while reading, the reader's attention will have wandered a surprising number of times, pulled down one associational path or another by autonomous psychic fluctuations. . . . Ordinary attention comes and goes without one's consent; it is not something one does, but something that happens to an individual.' (Novak 605)

This is the opposite of the unmixed attention Weil calls prayer. There are two points to note here. The first is that words have the power to capture and lead our attention. In reading, our attention is sequestered from the world. 'Now there is a clear sense in which all reading whatever is an escape . . . All such escape is from the same thing; immediate, concrete actuality.' (Lewis 68) This can happen with any reading (if our eyes are on the newspaper, our "eye" is on those ideas and not elsewhere); readers of literature, however, are frequently dubbed day-dreamers, the kind of activity Stoicism intends to curb. Yet surely in the moral regard the 'important question is what we escape to . . . we must judge each case on its merits. Escape is not necessarily joined to escapism.' (68-9) This means that the criterion for assessing curiosity, flight from attention to the 'real world', is the work that is read and its value. This is true for the Stoics too, but in a very restricted manner. For the Stoic, reading is simply a means for *ataraxia*;[191] (and *ataraxia* a means for a kind of life). The model for literature is *procheiron* because it serves as a reminder for instilling *ataraxia*: recitation is a means of bringing one's perceptive faculty to reason. Yet as a *literary* achievement, this is certainly very weak, since reading is not regarded as an end in itself: pleasure tends to be dismissed as a sign

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[188] 'The soul of a man harms itself, first and foremost, when it becomes (as far as it can) a separate growth, a sort of tumour on the universe . . . ' (Marcus Aurelius 2,16)

[189] 'At present bad literature, bad art, the cinema, etc., are an influence of the first importance in fixing immature and actually inapplicable attitudes to most things. Even the decision as to what constitutes a pretty girl or a handsome young man, an affair apparently natural and personal enough, is largely determined by magazine covers and movie stars. The quite common opinion that the arts have after all very little effect upon the community shows only that too little attention is being paid to the effects of bad art.' (Richards 189)

[190] The nonreactive element 'stems from unavoidable failure in the attempt to maintain concentrative attention.' (Novak 606)

[191] 'Why do you want to read anyway - for the sake of amusement or mere erudition? … Reading should serve the goal of attaining peace; if it doesn't make you peaceful what good is it?' (Epictetus 4,4,4)

of moral weakness. Beauty is a matter of pleasure because pleasure is an end in itself.[192] Truly literary people, who love reading, on the other hand, 'are always looking for leisure and silence in which to read and do so with their whole attention. When they are denied such attentive and undisturbed reading even for a few days they feel impoverished.' (Lewis 2-3) For the moralist, unliterary person, reading is tantamount to other kinds of training because what really counts is the kind of person you become.[193] This, however, does not completely vacate reading of its importance: it constrains its significance to comply with ethical limits. Epictetus tells us to keep 'Cleanthes' verse handy: Lead me, Zeus, lead me, Destiny.' By so praying, attention is focused onto decreating the self: 'devote yourself to the one thing that is truly yours and that no one can obstruct; make that the focus of all your reading, your writing and your lecture attendance.' (4,4,39) In Stoicism the focus, the attentional effort is to the self. 'I cannot call somebody "hard-working" knowing only that they read and write . . . not until I know the focus of all this energy.' (4,4,41)

In the end, Epictetus makes much the same point as Lewis in the sense that the importance of reading lies in what we escape to, and its merits. The religious case is the same, in the sense that belief is sustained by the fruits of its efforts.[194] Between Epictetus and Lewis, given that both believe that texts have the power to effect fundamental changes in the self,[195] the difference is in how each regards the journey, the reading that changes us. For the moralist, the change must conform to a model of which virtue is the cornerstone. For the aesthete, the impact of the change itself is a criterion of the value of the text: whether the direction of the change is toward 'virtue' is not an issue – *because we simply come back to ourselves*. As Aristotle puts it, 'imagination is a different thing from both perceiving and thinking . . . in the case of imagination, we are in just the same state as if we were looking at the terrible or comforting things in a painting.' (DA 427b) We know that looking at a painting is different than looking at a thing, in the same way that the painting and 'painting' are different things. And yet the interesting thing is that sometimes the difference disappears, for we react in the same way: frightened or comforted. Perception does not always make the distinction so squarely.

The danger of extending Stoic vigilance beyond the limits disciplining attention is that moral vigilance might stifle aesthetic enjoyment. Lewis calls the ethical constraint that stifles aesthetic criticism the 'Vigilant school of critics. To them criticism is a form of social and ethical hygiene.' (124) Their intentions may be pinned on a conception of 'good', but this does not speak

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[192] 'What is this intrinsic value that we call beauty? The answer given is that it is joy, or delight, or by whatever other name we choose to call the well-known fact. A beautiful thing is one that is pleasing in itself. Pleasure is the one intrinsically valuable thing known to man. Even virtue and knowledge gain their worth from the happiness they promise.' (Gilman 7)

[193] '"Isn't reading a kind of preparation for life?" But life is composed of things other than books. It is as if an athlete, on entering the stadium, were to complain that he's not outside exercising.' (Epictetus 4,4,11)

[194] 'The deity to whom the prophets, seers and devotees who founded the particular cult bore witness was worth something to them personally. They could use him. He guided their imagination, warranted their hopes, and controlled their will, - or else they required him as a safeguard against the demon and a curber of other people's crimes. In any case, they chose him for the value of the fruits he seemed to them to yield.' Gods live and die by the perception of the value of these fruits: 'So soon as the fruits began to seem quite worthless . . . the deity grew discredited, and was erelong neglected and forgotten.' (James, The Varieties of Religious Experience 329)

[195] To the literary, 'the first reading of some literary work is often . . . an experience so momentous that only experiences of love, religion, or bereavement can furnish a standard of comparison. Their whole consciousness is changed. They have become what they were not before. But there is no sign of anything like this among the other sort of readers.' (Lewis 3)

for their appreciation of artistic value[196], nor does it justify their self-proclaimed authority.[197] In short, 'you can admire them as critics only if you also revere them as sages'– to admire the criticism of the Vigilants, one must accept their conception of the good life. (127) But no conception should be forced on a work: realizing this is understanding the counter-therapy that aims at destroying pictures and recovering intuition. A book is to be read for what it is, not in a single mode, 'solemnly or gravely' (11), and this is a case of serious reading. 'Now the true reader reads every work seriously in the sense that he reads it whole-heartedly, makes himself as receptive as he can . . . What is meant lightly he will take lightly; what is meant gravely, gravely.' (11) Moral thought casts a shadow over literary appreciation.[198] Yet the question remains under what conditions aesthetic and ethical impulses may be combined within reading in a philosophically plausible sense. For either element on its own seems rather pointless: in a balanced life as well as a balanced artwork, Apollonian impulses require the Dyonisian and vice versa.

Novak's second point on reactive attention concerns this point of serious reading - that we tend to stray from the text by passively following free associations prompted by words. Aesthetic judgment cannot be a point-by-point matching of criteria: it is a reaction of sensibility, that is, of trained character. Taste involves an education in art. The ethical relevance of aesthetic attention is related to necessity in that true understanding of a true work of art will have an impact in the character of he who has the capacity to contemplate, to 'be seriously receptive'. Aesthetic contemplation relates to ethics inasmuch as we perceive in the tremendousness of an artwork an image of the reality of the universe, and this can only, if this image is seriously read, make us feel humble.[199] This is Roquentin's criterion of shame. It is this capacity to understand necessity that makes Stoicism an aid in serious reading. 'The Roman caricature of Stoicism also appeals to the muscular will. But true Stoicism, the Stoicism of the Greeks, from which Saint John, or perhaps Christ, borrowed the terms "*Logos*" and "*pneuma*," is purely desire, piety, and love. It is full of humility.' (Weil, Waiting for God 127) This disciplined restraint on attention – and *logos*, language - is the main function of Stoic *prosoche* in what regards reading. If curiosity is a distancing from circumspection, then work is a de-distancing: reading itself is work, the work of attention, subject to training, methods, discipline and, namely in the first case of discerning what we give our attention to, of aesthetic criteria: of taste. We thus come closer to a sense of seriousness, born out of circumspection and necessity, in the two acts required for an artwork to be perceived: its craft (a making) and its interpretation (a doing) – in our case, writing and reading. This element of work (discipline and method) is the most salient aspect of *prosoche* and, given its role in the training of perception and thus of taste also, should not be neglected as a participative element in literary

[196] 'All criticism, no doubt, is influenced by the critic's views on matters other than literature. But usually there has been some free play, some willingness to suspend disbelief (or belief) or even repugnance while we read the good expression of what, in general, we think bad . . . But the Vigilants, finding in every turn of expression the symptom of attitudes which it is a matter of life and death to accept or resist, do not allow themselves this liberty. Nothing is for them a matter of taste. They admit no such realm of experience as the aesthetic. There is for them no specifically literary good.' (Lewis 126)

[197] 'We have learned from the political sphere that committees of public safety, witch-hunters, Ku Klux Klans . . . can become dangers as great as those they were formed to combat . . . Thus under Vigilant criticism a new head falls nearly every month. The list of approved authors grows absurdly small.' (Lewis 127)

[198] 'This is where the literary Puritans may fail most lamentably. They are too serious as men to be seriously receptive as readers.' (Lewis 12)

[199] 'Art is an attempt to transport into a limited quantity of matter, modeled by man, an image of the infinite beauty of the entire universe. If the attempt succeeds, this portion of matter should not hide the universe, but on the contrary it should reveal its reality to all around.' (Weil, Waiting for God 107)

theory. Vigilance essentially plays a similar role to rules in Wittgenstein's language games: rules give form to practices, but only become salient (conspicuous, cf. Ch.1) when something goes wrong, when a rule is misapplied.[200] Vigilance is the detection of error (whose religious mode is the *garde du coeur*), and thus a form of perfectionism. That works of art are contemplated are marks of their formal perfection: the artist strives to perfect his art, his language, his technique - and practice makes for perfection. But training is not merely a means or techniques – it is already a taking steps in perfectionism.[201] Perfectionism does not mean having-arrived, but wanting-to: it is forward-looking.[202] It is thus as a desire that perfectionism relies on contemplative attention.[203] This is what modern moral philosophers, such as Nussbaum and MacIntyre have failed to understand in Stoicism, by regarding the will and disciplined obedience to necessity solely, as Weil has said, in the Roman, caricatural, version. *Procheiron* as rejoinders to attention constitute not exactly a language but work negatively, as prayer against distractions, toward forming a context of meaningfulness (without which it would not be able to make sense), for a new, oracular language to surge.[204]

## Obedience to Necessity

A major point MacIntyre opposes in Stoicism is what he calls the Singleness of virtue (its status as a universal value). 'The plurality of the virtues and their teleological ordering in the good life . . . disappear; a simple monism of virtue takes its place.' He ties this to the conception that in Stoicism 'to live well is to the live the divine life, to live well is to serve not one's private purposes, but the cosmic order. (169) Nussbaum[205] too contends absolute values in her (justified) pursuit for a moral perception based on an improvised reaction to particulars, which she dubs the 'Aristotelian conception'; which she grounds, however, exclusively on practical wisdom (*phronesis*).[206] This

[200] 'One learns the game by watching how others play it. But we say that it is played according to such-and-such rules because an observer can read these rules off from the way the game is played a like a natural law governing the play. —— But how does the observer distinguish in this case between players' mistakes and correct play? There are characteristic signs of it in the players' behaviour. Think of the behaviour characteristic of someone correcting a slip of the tongue. It would be possible to recognize that someone was doing so even without knowing his language.' (Wittgenstein PI I, 54)

[201] 'Precepts are not given for the sake of being practised, but practice is prescribed in order that precepts may be understood. They are scales. One does not play Bach without having done scales. But neither does one play a scale merely for the sake of the scale.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 124)

[202] 'Personally, I believe firmly – albeit perhaps naively – that it is possible for modern man to live, not as a sage *(sophos)* – most of the ancients did not hold this to be possible – but as a practitioner of the ever-fragile *exercise* of wisdom.' (Hadot 211)

[203] 'The authentic and pure values – truth, beauty and goodness – in the activity of a human being are the result of one and the same act, a certain application of the full attention to the object. Teaching should have no aim but to prepare, by training the attention, for the possibility of such an act. All the other advantages of instruction are without interest.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 120)

[204] 'All these preparatory protocols, by eliminating from the field of the retreat worldly, idle, physical, natural language, in short other languages, are aimed at achieving the homogeneity of the language to be constructed, in a word, its pertinence; they correspond to that *speech situation* which is not interior to the code (which is why linguists have barely studied it until now ), but without which the constitutive ambiguity of the language would reach an intolerable threshold.' (Barthes 52)

[205] As forewarned in Intro., I shall have to heavily truncate my discussion, which would occupy too much space, of LK and After Virtue read against NE and a defense of the Stoics.

[206] 'This practical wisdom, the "discernment" of the correct choice rests with something he calls "perception". From the context it is evident that this is some sort of complex responsiveness to the salient features of one's concrete situation.' Nussbaum divides her Aristotelian conception into three claims: 'an attack on the claim that all valuable things are commensurable; an argument for the priority of particular judgments to universals; and a defense of the emotions and the imagination as essential to rational choice.' (LK 54-5)

anchoring of moral behavior on *phronesis* is the result of the closer link this kind of wisdom has with particulars, which Nussbaum uses to oppose Aristotle against Plato, whom she sides exclusively with *episteme*, in spite of the ambiguity she recognizes in the term.[207] Nussbaum's oppositional strategy is meant to make deliberation salient[208] (appear favorable as an either/or) to the reader versus intuitive reason (*nous*).[209] In terms of my own distinction, she is opposing meditation to contemplation, respectively tying the first to Aristotle and the latter to Plato. Aristotle, however, does not oppose but complement the two.[210] Nussbaum's paper practically begins with only the first sentence of the following section:

> 'That practical wisdom is not scientific wisdom is evident; for it is, as has been said, concerned with the ultimate particular fact, since the thing to be done is of this nature. It is opposed then, to intuitive reason; for intuitive reason is of the limiting premises, for which no reason can be given, while practical wisdom is concerned with the ultimate particular, which is the object not of scientific knowledge but of perception – not the perception of qualities peculiar to one sense but a perception akin to that by which we perceive that the particular figure before us is a triangle; for in that direction as well there will be a limit. But this is rather perception than practical wisdom, though it is another kind of perception than that of the qualities peculiar to each sense.' (NE 1142a)

But what follows in the section moves backward from Nussbaum's claim. The 'kind of perception' Aristotle gestures toward is what I would like to call attention: a holistic perception of form that already includes the idea, the interpretation. Advancing an introductory description of poetic attention: 'When we go to the well, when we go through the woods, we are always already going through the word "well", through the word "woods," even if we do not speak the words and do not think of anything relating to language.' (Heidegger WPF 132) In Heidegger's account, there is a necessary relation between language and the perception of beings. Indeed, Nussbaum is also attempting to describe such a holistic form of attention - form bound to content, and also maintaining, again quoting Aristotle that 'discernment rests with perception.' (LK 66, 1109b) Yet the perception that this is a triangle, as Aristotle notes, involves not only the recognition of visual properties ('peculiar to' the sense of vision) but of a universal form, a concept, which can be recognized in roofs, shapes of heads, etc. – of ideas; just as goodness is recognized in particular actions. And here too 'there will be a limit', and here Aristotle relates this perception with intuitive reason, as against practical wisdom.

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[207] 'In the paper the word "scientific" will be used as Aristotle used it, to designate a family of characteristics that were usually associated with the claim that a body of knowledge had the status of an *episteme*. Since the aspiration to *episteme* took different forms in the projects of different opponents, Aristotle's attack on scientific conceptions of rationality is a family of attacks . . . [which are, however,] combined into a single conception in certain works of Plato.' (LK 55)

[208] Since for Nussbaum, content is (correctly) bound to form ('form and style are not incidental features. A view of life is *told*.' LK 5), 'Built into the very structure of a novel is a certain conception of what matters. In the novelists we study here, when we do find a Kantian character . . . those characters are not likely to fare well with the reader . . . A different sense of salience would have dictated a different form.' (LK 26) This repudiation of Kantian characters is essentially a rejection of Lewis' Vigilants, but it also incorporates without distinction all of Stoicism

[209] *Phronesis* 'is opposed, then, to intuitive reason [*nous*; for intuitive reason is of the limiting premisses, for which no reason can be given, while practical wisdom is concerned with the ultimate particular'. (NE 1142a)

[210] That Nussbaum is forcing Aristotle's hand can be read in her admission that although 'Universalizability he accepts up to a point . . . to give a clear description of the view . . . we must insist on this distinction more forcefully than does Aristotle, whose primary opponent is a Plato whose universals are also highly general.' (LK 67-8)

The reason for this shifting between particularist and universalist positions is that to do good involves contemplating the intermediate fixed point that is the superlative good.[211] Incidentally, this was, as we have seen, Aristotle's very definition of virtue: the singular notion that Nussbaum and MacIntyre wish to rebuke the Stoics for, using Aristotle. But doing good is not only contemplating the good since, just as theory needs practice and vice versa, reason has two parts 'which grasp a rational principle – one by which we contemplate the kind of things whose originative causes are invariable, and one by which we contemplate variable things'. (1138b) This is due to conformity of perception to kinds: the soul possesses different forms of perception adequate to particular kinds of beings.[212] And just as the soul conforms to different kinds of objects, so do people conform to – and tend toward different - kinds of thinking. Because Aristotle thinks empirically, he looks at people as examples of kinds of thinking.[213] The kind of thinking most akin to practical wisdom is deliberation (meditation), which is immediately opposed to scientific thinking but through the negative: 'Now no one deliberates about things which are invariable, or about things that it is impossible for him to do.' (1140a) Intuitive reason (*nous*), Aristotle has told us, is of 'the limiting premises', i.e. it 'grasps the first principles' (1140b) from which science proceeds. *Nous*, however, cannot perceive beyond this limit, for as we have just been told, axioms are those rules 'for which no reason can be given.' Moral ground, in short, is groundless; or better, it hovers over a sense of logical necessity (a should) that is based on convention, but not in any frivolous sense: it is based on the longstanding human tradition we might call spiritual or even mythological. It is based, in other words, on education in beliefs.

Philosophical wisdom (*sophia*), 'the most finished of the forms of knowledge', which Aristotle places above practical wisdom, is the perception that unifies *nous* and *episteme*. 'It follows that the wise man must not only know what follows from the first principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles. Therefore wisdom must be intuitive reason combined with scientific knowledge – scientific knowledge of the highest objects which it has received as it were its proper completion.' Wisdom also has its equivalent in the arts, namely in the works of the most excellent artists, such as Phidias and Polyclitus; but the *sophron* is he who is 'wise in general, not in some particular field'. The *sophron*, the philosopher, is he who is dedicated to the contemplation of ideas. When Aristotle initially considers the Platonists, he distinguishes between kinds of goods, between talk of internal goods ('things good in themselves') and external goods ('things useful'). (NE 1096b) MacInyre's definitions of goods internal and external make the same distinction focusing on practices.[214] As kinds of people, philosophers are those who aim at internal goods as

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[211] '. . . there is a mark to which the man who has the rule looks, and heightens or relaxes his activity accordingly, and there is a standard which determines the mean states which we say are intermediate between excess and defect, being in accordance with the right rule.' (NE 1138b)

[212] '. . . for where objects differ in kind the part of the soul answering to each of the two is different in kind, since it is in virtue of a certain likeness and kinship with their objects that they have the knowledge they have.' (NE 1138b)

[213] 'Regarding practical wisdom we shall get at the truth by considering who are the person we credit with it.' (NE 1140a)

[214] MacIntyre uses the example of how to motivate an intelligent child to learn chess, who has no particular desire to learn but loves candy. So he instigates the child with the promise of candy, and the child thus plays to win, not worried, however, about whether cheating is the means to candy. 'But, so we may hope, there will come a time when the child will find in those goods specific to chess, in the achievement of a certain highly particular kind of analytical skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity, a new set of reasons, reasons now not just for winning in a particular occasion, but for trying to excel in whatever way the game of chess demands. Now if the child cheats, he or she will be defeating not me, but himself or herself.' Candy is an example for one of those 'goods externally and contigently attached to chess-playing . . . in the case of real adults such goods as prestige, status and money.' These examples are what the Stoics call externals. 'There are always alternative ways for

opposed to deliberating on how to achieve external goods. Those of practical wisdom 'can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general' and thus the example is the statesman, Pericles. The *sophron*, on the other hand, is ignorant of means and practicalities, but has the capacity for awe.

> '. . . some even of the lower animals have practical wisdom . . . for there are other things much more divine in their nature even than man, e.g. the bodies of which the heavens are framed . . . This is why we say Anaxagoras, Thales, and men like them have philosophical but not practical wisdom, when we see them ignorant of what is to their own advantage, and why we say that they know things that are remarkable, admirable, difficult, and divine, but useless; viz. because it is not human goods that they seek.' (1141a)

When Aristotle further investigates the relation of philosophical to practical wisdom, his description becomes one of attention to the self, i.e. to character. Considering the 'utility of these qualities of mind', he places, in a very proto-Stoic move, a man's character as a whole over only 'knowing' (being able to recite) moral truths. 'Practical wisdom is . . . concerned with things . . . good for a man, but these are the things which it is the mark of a good man to do, and we are none the more able to act for knowing them if the virtues are states of character'. Stoic insistence on action as proof of intention is present in Aristotle's opinion that practical wisdom on its own, that knowing rules (of moral etiquette) 'is of no use for those who are good [nor] to those who have not virtue; for it will make no difference whether they have practical wisdom themselves or obey others who have it'. (1143b) Philosophical wisdom is what must be present not as a means but an end, for these two wisdoms 'produce something, not as the art of medicine produces health . . . but as health produces health; so does philosophical wisdom produce happiness; for, being a part of virtue entire, by being possessed and by actualizing itself it makes a man happy.' (1143a)

*Sophia* causes happiness through virtuous desire whilst *phronesis* checks the necessary steps are taken depending on the circumstances. Mere *phronesis* does not ensure happiness because, although it may provide external goods, it will not know whether desire of these is virtuous or not: only a good man will know. The man of mere practical wisdom is not good, but clever.[215] Again relating both wisdoms, the discernment of what must be done to carry out the good belongs to the 'eye of the soul', an image of attention. Nussbaum's restriction of moral perception to *phronesis* ignores his intention to relate the two wisdoms. Aristotle's defense that philosophical wisdom rests above all others is largely made in terms of religious description: *nous* is a divine attribute.[216] But viewed logically, this is essentially due to its axiomatic character: Aristotle takes *nous* to be the ground of virtue because it alone recognizes 'the good' in things. As it will later also be for Stoicism, the knowledge inherent to contemplation is largely, as we shall soon see, regarded as a compound of reason and desire (*boulesis*).[217] The concept of *boulesis* is crucial to my argument on

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achieving such goods . . . [whereas] on the other hand there are the goods internal to the practice of chess which cannot be had in any way but by playing chess or some other game of that specific kind. (MacIntyre 188)

[215] 'Now if the mark', which *nous* discerns, 'be noble, the cleverness is laudable, but if the mark be bad, the cleverness is mere smartness; hence we call even men of practical wisdom clever or smart.' (1144a)

[216] Although it gets things done, practical wisdom 'is not *supreme* over philosophical wisdom, i.e. over the superior part of us, any more than the art of medicine is over health; for it does not use it but provides for its coming into being; it issues orders, then, for its sake, but not to it. Further, to maintain its supremacy would be like saying that the art of politics rules the gods because it issues orders about all the affairs of the state.' (1145a)

[217] 'The Stoics, of course, did not invent the term *boulesis* . . . Aristotle uses the term *boulesis* in the same way as Plato, as the desire *(orexis)* for the good, in his *Ethics* and in the *De Anima*. In both Plato and Aristotle, wish is a function of the rational part

attention, given the Stoic idea of a point within the soul that may spearhead the soul as a whole. I believe, as we shall see in Ch.3, that this can be traced back to Aristotle's sketchy argument in DA for attention as a sixth sense. The qualification of a *supernatural* desire comes with the admission that goodness is ultimately groundless; yet notwithstanding, must stand.[218]

> 'A proper separation of fact and value, as a defence of morality, lies in the contention that moral value cannot be *derived* from fact. That is, our activity of moral discrimination cannot be explained as merely one natural instinct among others, or our "good" *identified* with pleasure, or a will to live, or what the government says (etc.). The possession of a moral sense is uniquely human; morality is, in the human world, something unique, *sui generis*, "as if it came to us from elsewhere". It is an intimation of "something higher". The demand that we be virtuous. It is "inescapable and fundamental". The interpretation of such phrases, including less fancy versions of the same intuition, has been, and should be, a main activity of moral philosophers.' (Murdoch 26)

As Wittgenstein has intimated regarding the absolute use of good,[219] a should is a moral tautology: you should because you should; but also because otherwise you will not want to play the game for the sake of the game itself, which in turn requires obedience to its rules. Stoicism aligns the necessity of virtue (a should) with obedience to natural necessity (an is), joining fact and value.[220] But this is always constrained by the notion (as St. Basil and Murdoch say) that 'natural' in this case refers to what is unique to the human being: reason; and also what follows from it: virtuous actions. Unlike animals which purportedly act merely by instinct, humans have a choice, a freedom to act rationally or irrationally, i.e. according to conventional rules.[221] The obedience to necessity, moreover, that is presupposed in the Stoic conception of Nature (where virtue is understood as an expression of what is naturally divine in man)[222] is not as much a belief in an abstract ideal as it is a moral qualification of a kind of action: 'The Stoic virtues . . . purport to give us . . . a particular outlook on the world, so that everything we do is describable by a virtue adverb – conversing, walking about, or whatever, *phronimos*, "reasonably"' (177) Since rules are to be

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of the soul, not of the nonrational or "lower" parts – which by the way indicates that Platonic-Aristotelian moral psychology is itself perhaps not as familiar or commonsensical (by our lights) as we might first have supposed . . . wish, which belongs essentially to the rational part of the soul, counts as a type of desire.' (Strange 33)

[218] 'God can only be present in creation under the form of absence'; yet 'We know by means of our intelligence that what the intelligence does not comprehend is more real than what it does comprehend.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 109; 128)

[219] The aforementioned 'I know I behave badly, but then I don't want to behave any better', which the moral person finds preposterous. (LE 5)

[220] In a defense of the Stoic doctrine of virtue, Long says that 'Statements about Nature . . . can, and I think should, be construed as *combining* statements of fact and value . . . Descriptions of 'Natural events' would thus be descriptions of what is and should be the case.' (147-8)

[221] 'Freedom is something good and valuable; to arbitrarily wish for things to happen that arbitrarily seem to you best is not good, it's disgraceful. How do we approach the practice of writing? Do I want to write the name 'Dion' whatever way I please? No, I learn to want to write it the way it is supposed to be written. … Getting an education means learning to bring our will in line with the way things happen – which is to say, as the ruler of the universe arranged. He arranged for there to be summer and winter, abundance and lack, virtue and vice – all such opposites meant for the harmony of the whole; and he gave us each a body and bodily parts, material belongings, family and friends.' (Epictetus 1,12,12-16) Incidentally, here we can also observe how Stoic virtue accepts the existence of opposites (of good and evil) and works from there. The point is not that we force others to partake in our 'moral freedom' as the Vigilant tries to do, but that 'we remain true to our nature, however other people see fit to behave.' (1,12,19) This again comes down to discernment in the sense of moral sensibility, to be 'responsible for what is in your power – the proper use of impressions.' (1,12,34)

[222] 'The nature of the universe was, is, and always will be the same, and things cannot happen any differently than they do now. It's not just mankind and the other animals on earth that share in the cycle of change, but also the heavens and even the four basic elements . . . If we try to adapt our mind to the regular sequence of changes and accept the inevitable with good grace, our life will proceed quite smoothly and harmoniously.' (Epictetus Frag. 8)

followed as being intrinsic to a practice (as in MacIntyre's example, and not out of a desire of externals), it follows that Stoic training of virtue is the instilling of a desire to act reasonably, which presupposes a decreational change: to act in selflessness, not selfishness. Moral training can take off only by making this the salient option, which in turn is effected by the positive attribute of reason as the divine gift. But this involves a certain circularity, since to act reasonably is the right way to go about things because it is the natural way to act: it is how things are for us, as moral creatures.[223]

But the glitch is that Nature does not say this, men do. 'This is the dilemma of Stoic ethics . . .The rules are according to Nature, and therefore right; but to know what it is about Nature that makes them right, to obey the rules as a moral principle, is only possible for someone of perfect reason'. The Christian answer to 'How is one to know whether one's reason meets this condition?' was to postulate intuition as the means to perceive goodness. What Long claims the Stoics did, on the other hand, 'was to offer the sage as a paradigm.' (Long 151) To know why we must act (or play chess) virtuously is literally out of the question – so in order to sustain the activity on its own grounds we are shown role models, examples. For the Stoics, this was Socrates.[224] Virtue is empirically grounded this way: rules are general examples for particular purposes: tips.[225] When Nussbaum and MacIntyre criticize Stoic rules by comparing them to laws, they are right about the strict sense of discipline and duty Stoicism wants to transmit, but wrong (because they have literally ignored the importance of Stoic concepts of freedom and adaptation in their system) about the way their rules are supposed to work – as inspirational principles for improvisation.[226] Nussbaum and MacIntyre's particularism loses sight of a sense of discipline, training and method that constrains critical assessment, and that is symbolized in the abstract noun Virtue (which, however, as Long clarifies, works as a moral adverb). Virtue signals a way of doing: bound to a consideration of the whole.[227] Stoic axioms serve as logical boundaries of action – just as in games, rules are always the same, but what happens in them never is, it depends on choice – like writing.[228] Choice

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[223] 'By giving human beings reason, Nature provides the necessary conditions of good or bad actions . . . By endowing human beings with "impulses toward virtue" Nature provides conditions sufficient to direct them toward what accords with Nature.' (Long 140-1)

[224] 'That's how Socrates got to be the person he was, by depending on reason to meet his every challenge. You're not yet Socrates, but you can still live as if you want to be him.' (Epictetus Ench. 51,3) Among other things, he exemplified the moral survival that St. Basil talked of: 'Socrates: He didn't care; it was not his skin he wanted to save, but the man of honour and integrity. These things are not open to compromise or negotiation. . . . In his own words, he didn't want to save the body, he wanted to preserve the element that grows and thrives with every act of justice, the element that is diminished and dies by injustice.' (Epictetus 4,1,161;163)

[225] 'One can say that the concept of a game is a concept with blurred edges. "But is a blurred concept a concept at all?" . . . Isn't one that isn't sharp often just what we need? . . . is it senseless to say "Stay roughly here"? . . . And this is just how one might explain what a game is. One gives examples and intends them to be taken in a particular way. I do not mean by this expression, however, that he is supposed to see in those examples that common feature which I for some reason was unable to formulate, but that he is now to employ those examples in a particular way. Here giving examples is not an indirect way of explaining in default of a better one. For any general explanation may be misunderstood too. This, after all, is how we play the game. (I mean the language-game with the word "game".)' (Wittgenstein PI §1, 71)

[226] 'Thus, it is stupid to say, "Tell me what to do!" What should I tell you? It would be better to say, "Make my mind adaptable to any circumstance.' (Epictetus 2,2,21)

[227] 'What is your profession? Being a good man. But this can only come about through philosophic concepts - concepts of the nature of the Whole, and concepts of the specific constitution of man.' (Marcus Aurelius 11,5)

[228] Epictetus continues, 'Saying "Tell me what to do" is like an illiterate saying, "Tell me what to write whenever I'm presented with a name." If I say "John" and then someone else comes along and gives him "Jane" instead of "John" to write, what is going to happen? How is he going to write it? If you have learned your letters, though, you are ready for anything anyone dictates.' (Epictetus 2,2,22)

is required because in the world there is always an element of chance:[229] rules do not make chance disappear from the world, they just try to make it more manageable and interpretable by serving as guidelines. And this requires the adaptation to particulars Epictetus talks about. Stoicism is disciplining for free, individual, critical choice,[230] and in this sense constitutes the rational preparation for attentive reading.

Choosing what words to write is similar to choosing what meanings to interpret in words articulated in texts in the sense that meaningful writing is always about something: mostly a selection and composition of aspects. Writing sets thinking on paper, and shares it. In close reading there are no particular pre-set rules for interpreting thought except for attending to those words. The point is that to be able to do this requires prior training in controlling one's attention from distractions (as contemplation requires meditation) – and this general precept is easily forgotten if we go about a poem looking for specific things which theories suggest poems are and talk about. Poems require added attention because poets should also take care with the 'form' of their writing: how they write as well as what (about what) they write. But the former takes precedence: the what can be anything or nothing – meaning life in general, being-in-the-world. The importance of being able to read attentively is discovering whether a poem is 'good' is also to discover its importance for us. So attentive reading is always critical in the measure that we read for ourselves.[231]

To read 'virtue' as a moral *adverb* is clearly to bring it closer to 'being'; whilst the noun form is the grammatical category that expresses the unification of parts into a whole, which helps to set up an 'object' for the desire of reason; like God – like symbols. The urge to find a single reason to ground our moral or aesthetic existence - i.e. an existence that comprises value, meaningfulness – might stem from the (epistemic) tendency

"That Man as a Rational Animal Desires The Knowledge Which Is His Perfection", Geoffrey Hill

Abiding provenance I would have said
the question stands
even in adoration
clause upon clause
with or without assent
reason and desire on the same loop --
I imagine singing I imagine

getting it right -- the knowledge
of sensuous intelligence
entering into the work --
spontaneous happiness as it was once

[229] Philosophical wisdom loves both necessity and chance, the eternal and the fleeting (the Apollonian and Dyonisian) as continuous elements of life: 'Stars and blossoming fruit-trees: utter permanence and extreme fragility give an equal sense of eternity.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 108)
[230] If you are not prepared, I don't know what I should tell you to do. Because there may be events that call for you to act differently – and what will you do or say then?' (Epictetus 2,2,24)
[231] Concluding his lesson on attention to particular circumstances, Epictetus reminds us to 'hold on to this general principle and you won't need specific advice. If you hanker after externals you are going to be twirled round and round at the will of your master. "Who's my "master"?" Whoever controls what you desire or dislike.' (2,2,25)

given our sleeping nature to awake by
and know
innocence of first inscription

I would like to make some general comments about poems before I analyze Hill's. As we have seen with Auerbach regarding abstraction, the fewer words a good poem has, but especially the less articulated they are in comparison to ordinary, communicative speech, the more attention is prompted for each because of their allusiveness; and as we grant them thoughtful time, they revolve around in our thinking, like loops that want to resolve themselves. Each poem is a new game we do not know the rules of, and only have hints to. These hints come from the poem itself, and others we have read. But on the whole, poems are articulated fragments, compositions of words (the minimal unit of significance) articulated into verses, sometimes articulated into stanzas, which may be articulated into larger thematic units like chapters or the like – but in the end, suggest a complete unit (they begin and they end). Like many things in life – and sometimes like thinking about life itself -, until we get an idea of the composite whole, we feel a lack of closure, incompleteness, and we continue to try to make sense of what prompts this feeling. If sense fails, either the poem or the reader has.

When Alice reads "Jabberwocky", she says, "'It seems very pretty" . . . but it's RATHER hard to understand!" (You see she didn't like to confess, ever to herself, that she couldn't make it out at all.)' (134) Yet her instinct is correct in that there is no ground to the poem - the minimal units do not work: most of the words are humbug, articulated in a way that seems like language. It looks as if it should make sense because there are some words we recognize, mainly connectors, words which create logical articulations. It looks like a poem –it has verses and it even rhymes – but apparently this is not a sufficient criterion. Perhaps, then, the single most important constraint for a poem is for it to mean. And yet the word 'meaning' is strange because meaning in poetry is not like meaning in ordinary language: on the contrary, it usually subverts it completely: we do not go about our everyday affairs talking poetry. Poems not only consist of the senses we can read in their words, but of nonsense too – a balance of Nietzsche's primordial impulses (which he symbolizes in the ancient gods and their attributes).

It is less useful, I believe, to think of criteria for poems than it is to think of a balance struck between the musical effects of words and their semantic possibilities. There is no single property (or group of them) that *must* be there.[232] There is no single criterion for poems in general (all kind of things get published under this category), neither is there a more or less fixed number of criteria, a list of properties that comply to a cluster of criteria, for a poem to be 'a poem'.[233] I think that in terms of 'criteria', it is simpler to think of two things regarding meaning in poems: ingredients and constraint. In terms of their effects, the articulation of words and other resources

[232] 'A beautiful thing involves no good except itself, in its totality, as it appears to us. We are drawn towards it without knowing what to ask of it. . . . We want to get behind beauty, but it is only a surface. It is like a mirror that sends us back our own desire for goodness.' (WG 105)

[233] Regarding cluster theory in aesthetics, see Gaut, Berys. "'Art" as a cluster concept'. *Theories of Art Today*. Carroll, Noël, ed. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000, 25-44.

(punctuation, spacing, etc.) are more like ingredients in a chemical formula. When we mix ingredients, a *new* compound is formed, a composite.[234] For the writer (the pharmacist) to know when to stop adding and subtracting elements from her formula is of itself a skill to recognize this balance in the new composite. In terms of causation too, there need not be a single factor, a single motive for metaphor – there are all sorts of causes (and even *coinstantaneous* causes) that lead people to write or express themselves in other ways. Notwithstanding, we sometimes feel that poems have a general effect that results from their being a kind of thing, and as such the general form of poems (perhaps the, usually implicit, idea we have of what these things, if we could only get them 'to work', are for) instigate us to imitate their harmony in our understanding.[235] Our rational nature pushes us into an attempt to harmonize what is indeterminate.

Hill's first verse appears to be an elided conditional clause that would read: 'If I were to abide provenance, then I would have said - "The question stands"' (and the reported speech would possibly include the rest of the poem). It sounds like the poet is not looking for origins in the sense of causal reasons (given the words in the title that circumscribe the theme, what the poem is about). But as we read on, some verses are indented, distanced from their usual place of origin, suggesting a fragmentation; or at perhaps movement, change - possibly an opposition, the suggestion of dichotomy, given that most of the verses are conventionally aligned. This evokes the tension within *epodai* between Apollinian reason and words, and Dyonisian desire and music (which is formal). And then also, if we read the first verse on its own, we can also read that 'abiding provenance (which I am doing), I would have said (something, because I am not saying)', and so 'the question stands' because I am not affirming but (like Ashbery) am saying-asking. This utterance – since if 'I would have said' then I did not - need not even be in words: Hill may just be referring to intentions as in prayer, the silent language of the heart. If Hill is attending to provenance, the origin (of metaphysics – of life, the mind, or being), then it does not speak. So 'the question stands', it persists 'clause upon clause', as verses (and propositions) call for articulation, or a senseless matter that calls (desires) for the determination of form and intention (meaning). Since his title is grammatically a relative clause, and the title identifies the poem, we can also read this verse as referring to Hill's thinking (in response to the question that stands), poem upon poem: *poems as forms of thinking*. Readers of poems, however, are in an awkward position: like the referent of the main clause to the subordinate clause (which 'originates' the subordinate clause's meaning), their meaning is missing - it must be gleaned from what is merely suggested by the words – by interpreting, articulating and comparing what is said in all the verses. Poems have to be thought out.

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[234] '. . . component elements tend to efface [the distinctive characteristics of] one another. Such is the effect [on one another] of all ingredients of which, when compounded, some one thing is formed.' (Aristotle PN 447a)

[235] 'The miracle of life which will not be expounded, but will remain a miracle, introduces a new element. In the growth of the embryo, Sir Everard Home, I think, noticed that the evolution was not from one central point, but co-active from three or more points. Life has no memory. That which proceeds in succession might be remembered, but that which is coexistent, or ejaculated from a deeper cause, as yet far from being conscious, knows not its own tendency. So is it with us, now skeptical, or without unity, because immersed in forms and effects all seeming to be of equal yet hostile value, and now religious, whilst in the reception of spiritual law. Bear with these distractions, with this coetaneous growth of the parts: they will one day be members, and obey one will. On that one will, on that secret cause, they nail our attention and hope. Life is hereby melted into an expectation or a religion.' (Emerson, "Experience")

Wedged between these verses is 'even in adoration', aligned with 'with or without assent', suggesting that the problem persists even without belief and obedience: it continues in silent assenting awe; but also in philosophical discourse, which is skeptical and need not assent. On the other hand, it also allows space for saying that even in faith, the question stands, even though thinking here is regarded as silent: it accepts the distance.[236] Thinking can therefore take different forms: religious contemplation embraces existential doubt in silence, but interpretation reacts to doubt in language. Existential mystery, the question of being, persists in thinking and in silent intuition– and persists as a loop that engulfs philosophy and religion, reason and desire. The way the poet ('I') 'would have said' provenance is: 'I imagine singing I imagine'. As a *loop*, it is (like the clause) incomplete: the last 'singing' is missing – there is once more no completion here – no knowledge here, only imagination, that knowledge is forestalled.[237] (If it were complete, there would be no desire.) All we have are looped clauses and verses (no full stops), made of minimal units of articulated signification (propositions) which, however (like verses) require articulation within the thematic whole, the aboutness of the poem. 'Singing' is thus what is described in the second stanza, a way of 'getting it right'. The transition between the stanzas - a jump over space, an absence of inscription – takes place on the cue of *the poet's imagining* that *I imagine* 'singing I imagine': the jump is now one of faith in poetic imagination, a faith in a way of using language, that singing might, if not give us something ('some flowers soon?'), then perhaps show us something, or let us see somewhat differently.

Before we move into the second stanza, I would like to return to Loyola and move onto Barthes' second operation for trying to get God to speak (i.e. to disclose His will through the creation of a language that listens): articulation. For Loyola, knowledge is an act whereby words grasp distinct fragments of the world, and discourse combines these into meanings.[238] The mystics, Barthes tells us, understood this well: 'Even when the goal of mystical experience is defined as being beyond language, where its very mark - which is the existence of articulated units - is obliterated, anterior states are classified, an inaugural language is described'. (53) Again, meditation precedes the silent thinking of contemplation: for Loyola thinking (prayer included) is born from language.[239] Yet this element of trained, critical thinking is often elided and is at the root of the fractured misconstrual of the myth of inspiration as *only* a direct reception of the ineffable: flowers simply fall out of the sky for the laureled. Yet the holistic myth symbolizes both: the fragmentation is in the reading, in a conception of interpretation as signifying in the mode of *episteme*.

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[236] 'God and the supernatural are hidden and formless in the universe. It is well that they should be hidden and nameless in the soul. Otherwise there would be a risk of having something imaginary under the name of God (those who fed and clothed Christ did not know it was Christ). This is the meaning of the ancient mysteries. Christianity (Catholic and Protestant) speaks too much about holy things.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 56)

[237] 'Intelligence can never penetrate the mystery, but it, and it alone, can judge the suitability of the words which express it. For this task it needs to be keener, more discerning, more precise, more exact and more exacting than any other.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 131) This neatly summarizes the role of thinking and its relation to attention to details in certain poets.

[238] In Loyola's *Exercises* 'everything is immediately divided, subdivided, classified . . . A simple operation which myth attributes to the Creator of the world, separating day, night, man , woman. elements, and species, forms the continuing basis of Ignatian discourse: *articulation*. The concept has, in Ignatius, another name which recurs constantly throughout his work: *discernment* . . . to recognize the founding function of difference; *discretio* . . . is the basis of all language, since everything linguistic is articulated.' (Barthes 52-3)

[239] '. . . just as for Bassuet (defending Ignatius against the mystics of the ineffable, St. John of the Cross and Fenelon), prayer must of necessity pass through language.' (Barthes 5)

Bossuet's treatise[240] is essentially a critique of a form of apophatic prayer (the 'prayer of quiet') that was practiced by the Quietists (whom he calls the false mystics) in the 17th century. Cardinal Caraccioli[241] writes of the Quietists, 'They enter into this prayer without any rule or method, without preparing themselves by any reading or consideration of a point'. (13) The brunt of the accusation is that 'they believe that without going through the exercises of the purgative way they can open the way to contemplation at the very start, by their own strength'. He gives an example: 'A woman brought up in this practice says repeatedly: "I am nothing, God is all; I am in the condition in which you see me because it so pleases God"' This recitation could, notwithstanding, indeed be those of a mystic. What distinguishes a quietist from a true mystic is that 'when one presents pious images to their minds, even of Jesus Christ, they force themselves to drive them away by shaking their heads, saying that such images separate them from God.' Bossuet frowns on this iconoclasm, defending a methodological use for images.[242]

This too is the basis of Loyola's vocabulary, who divides the life of Christ into multiple fragments, images meant to serve as a basis for imitation.[243] Ignatius' images provide a wide variety of elements as contrasted to the iconic singularities prompting the ineffable experiences of the mystic.[244] We come again upon Auerbach's distinction between texts fraught with foreground or background, i.e. whose effects respectively rely on descriptive language articulated beforehand, or sparse, abstract fragments requiring articulation. Positively grounded in language, an embroidery of *distinctio*, Ignatius' images do not offer themselves up as icons in the holistic sense we have discussed and the contemplation of which Barthes calls a 'fascination for the isolated object.' (54) Contrary to the icons of the mystic, the proficient contemplation of which elevates its reader to the silent apex of the mountain of language,[245] Ignatian images are not a vision, Barthes explains, but particular views, individual, syntactic strings.[246] These strings of articulated images are the braids which will later be reassembled to make up the text, the full picture (it is the thinking that informs contemplation by working within it, in Weil's initial description). Language, Barthes tells us, is the reassembling of the signs (fragmented, minimal units) that signify through contrast.[247] This is of

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[240] Father de Caussade wrote a catechistic summary of Bossuet's long treatise against the Quietists, in the form of dialogue.
[241] Letter sent to Pope Innocent XI in 1682, writes Caussade.
[242] Against the Quietists, the Cardinal points out that 'They commit the error of thinking that every thought that comes to them in the repose and silence of prayer is a light and an inspiration from God; and that therefore they are not subject to any law; and they think that every idea that passes through their mind is justified.' (Caussade 13) Mysticism requires - from a theological point of view - a prior grammar which is only interpretable within a totality of relevance which, in turn constitutes a way of life (Ch1).
[243] 'What is to be transported along this varied network of the *distinguo* is a unique material: the image. The image is very precisely a unit of imitation; the imitable material (principally the life of Christ) is divided into fragments so that it can be contained within a framework and fill it completely; the glowing bodies of hell, the screams of the damned', etc. (54)
[244] Barthes says they are not 'the solitary and encircled detail which ecstasy imprints on the mystic or hallucinating conscience: thus, Theresa, suddenly receiving a vision of Christ's hands "of so marvelous a beauty that I am powerless to picture them," or the hashish eater impelled to lose himself for hours, according to Baudelaire, in contemplation of a bluish smoke ring.' (54)
[245] '. . . for John of the Cross, images, forms and meditations are suitable only for beginners. The goal of the experience is, on the contrary, the deprivation of images; it is to "mount with Jesus to the summit of our spirit, on the mountain of Nakedness, without image" (Ruysbroek)' (66) Here we trace Weil's image of the mountain as a symbol for ineffability in the mystic tradition.
[246] 'The Ignatian image is separated only insofar as it is articulated: what constitutes it is its being caught up simultaneously in a difference and a contiguity (of the narrative type); thus it is contrasted with the "vision" (which Ignatius had experienced and on which he reports in his *Journal*), indistinct, elementary, and above all erratic ("felt or saw very luminously the Divine Being or Essence itself in the form of a sphere a little larger than the sun"). The Ignatian image is not a vision, it is a view'. (54-5)
[247] 'The articulation with which the image is stamped divides a contiguity; it is syntagmatic in nature and corresponds to that opposition of units within a sentence which linguists call "contrast."'

course Saussure's langue,[248] which reformulates the Judeo-Christian myth of the Fall in its necessitation of reassembling the fragmented world of the Original Sin (of discerning through language). Thus language – like verses making up the full meaning of a poem – is seen as the bits that need to be assembled correctly to recreate the original (true) world. (As hinted before, the ethical analogue of this work of assembly into signification is the battle against evil as perceived through ametric attention, in shame.)

In short, what is to be imitated – Christ – is divided into words, and Loyola's language consists in the act of reassembling them, but now on a different plane: in this imitation the voice of Christ becomes, by insistent recitation, that of Loyola. The life and Passion of Christ is to be reenacted, to be lived vicariously through the multitude of images framed by these theatrical exercises that are to insistently permeate each hour, day, week of the exercitant. As in Weil's concept of style, a preoccupation with the how of language ('beauty') is not what is important here,[249] but that the text becomes a theatre for an almost physical, vicarious experience.

> 'For this theater is entirely created in order that the exercitant may therein represent himself: his body is what is to occupy it. The very development of the retreat, throughout the final three Weeks, follows the story of Christ: he is born with Him, travels with Him, eats with Him, undergoes the Passion with Him. The exercitant is continually required to imitate twice, to imitate what he imagines: to think of Christ "as though one saw Him eating with His disciples, His way of drinking. of looking, of speaking; and try to imitate Him.'" (63)

The *Exercises* are a systematic machine, a methodology that turns the reader, the exercitant into a phantasmal apparition: something that exists only as an image, a perceived form that suggests a person: a pronoun: an 'I'. This phantasm, which for the dramatic fantasy to play out must be filled by '(Ignatius, the exercitant, the reader, whoever)' (63), enters (the images of) the life of Christ as desire.[250] This spirit that enters the theatre moves between the moods suggested by the text, and is moreover completely pliant to it.[251] Barthes suggests that the exercitant, as was Roquentin's wish, just is: 'does not disappear but displaces himself in the thing, like the hashish smoker totally caught up in the smoke from his pipe, who "smokes himself": he is no more than the verb that sustains and justifies the scene.' (64).

This machine that dissolves the 'I' into smoke finds a point of contact in the way writing can connect with the ancient concept of *logos* as universal reason. In an argument against self-deception, St. Antony says that writing, a therapeutic tool,[252] should be used for vigilance. His advice is that we 'note and record our actions and the stirring of the soul as though we were going to give an account to each other.' Antony calls on us to think of our thoughts as expressed, that is, as public, like actions are. The purpose is that our intentions become publically available for

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[248] 'Linguistics could only become a science by eliminating all "external" factors in favor of an exclusive focus on what he called *langue* – "language alone" or "language as such," the socially constructed system of differences that positioned all linguistic units in relation to others, thus permitting signs to function as vehicles of meaning.' (Harpham 20-1)

[249] Barthes' logothetes 'for platitude of style (as found in "great" writers), they have found a way to substitute volume of writing.' (6)

[250] 'This *I* takes advantage of all the situations the Gospel canvas provides in order to fulfill the symbolic motions of desire: humiliation, jubilation, fear, effusion, etc.'

[251] 'It has absolute plasticity: it can transform itself, reduce itself according to the needs of the comparison- "Consider who I am and make myself smaller and smaller through comparisons with (a) other men, (b) the Angels, (c) God.'"

[252] 'For the monk Antony, the therapeutic value of writing consists precisely in its universalizing power.' (Hadot 211)

scrutiny, for 'you can be sure that, being particularly ashamed to have made them known, we would stop sinning and even meditating on something evil. For who wants to be seen sinning?' (Athanasius 51) Shame is the perception that others would not approve of our actions, and is therefore of itself the result of social experience. A person writing 'is no longer alone, but is a part of the silently present human community. When one formulates one's personal acts in writing, one is taken up by the machinery of reason, logic, and universality. What was confused and subjective becomes thereby objective.' (Hadot 211) Here it becomes clearer how this notion of objectivity as public knowledge must be read into 'transcendence'.

Certain poems leave the 'I' largely unspecified. In Hill's poem, for example, the only instance of 'I' (in the first verse, 'who' attends to the cause of a potential saying) seems to be on the same generic level as 'man' in the title ('who' is a rational and desiderative animal). Nor is there any explicit audience: if the poem is an instance of communication, it is of a strange sort. 'The poet might as well be speaking to himself . . . thinking out loud'. (Brooks 113) Yet any poem, even if it is 'just' a monologue, a meditation – as Antony says of writing and Philips of prayer -, this presupposes a reader, an addressee, even none is designated (or even if it is a generic 'you'). 'But even in this talking to one's self, there is a sense of audience, and a law imposed by this sense. One can express one's self to one's self as an audience – and that means by respecting the form of what is said so that anyone quite distinct from the self may be able to get the full force and implication of what is being expressed.' What is being expressed is an *attitude toward* whatever provoked the writing of the poem (which brings poems very close to prayers). The vacancy of pronouns formally opens the path for my identification with (or rejection of) the writer's attitudes. 'We are concerned with the fact that the speaker of the poem, whether historical or fictional, is expressing an attitude through his particular use of language.' (114) This imaginative identification which Barthes insists upon as a mode of reading is indeed fundamental to the reading of poems, which rely on *tone*, i.e. on attitude toward things, which is how I become identified with the 'I', a mask waiting to be filled.

Loyola's focus on meditation as a method in the style of apophatic prayer as opposed to the cataphatic, stands within a longstanding discussion where Stoic *procheiron* (the textual ancestor of the *Exercises*) also take a seat. Hadot criticizes Foucault for 'propounding a culture of the self which is too aesthetic' (Hadot PWL 211). Hadot argues that whereas Foucault believes that 'the individual forges a spiritual identity for himself by writing down and re-reading disparate thoughts . . . the point is . . . rather to liberate oneself from one's individuality, in order to raise oneself up to universality.' (210) I would like to align this case with the poet. Who it is that speaks in poems varies. Brooks and Warren place the poet's voice on a scale: at one extreme 'we may place the impersonal poem with a totally unidentified speaker.' Grammatically, this is the voice of the oracle. 'Somewhere toward the middle of the scale . . . clearly identifiable speaker, but a speaker who is fictional.' At the other end, there is 'a poem which the poet proclaims to be directly autobiographical.' (13-4) On first sight, it would appear that Hadot's reader, who desires decreation, 'a new way of being-in-the-world, which consists in becoming aware of oneself as a part of nature, a portion of universal reason' (211), resides on the oracular side of the spectrum. Foucault's stylized self would then attempt to live between the fictional and the autobiographical, continually re-designing his life with textual aspects as it pleases him. Indeed, Barthes too, who personally sets aside Loyola's religious goals, reads Ignatius from such an aesthetic perspective:

'The text is an object of pleasure. The bliss of the text is often only stylistic', as when the author achieves 'expressive felicities'. (7)

Notwithstanding, Barthes had already told us that style is a relatively negligible quality in Loyola – deeper pleasure is only achieved 'whenever the "literary" Text (the Book) transmigrates into our life, whenever another writing (the Other's writing) succeeds in writing fragments of our own daily lives, in short, whenever a coexistence occurs.' (7) Hadot too speaks of identification with an "Other" - but for Hadot this is the transcendent, true self that identifies with Stoic *logos*.[253] Yet Barthes' sense of coexistence is partial: he does not pray nor believe with Loyola, he lives his Text at a citatory distance.[254] Barthes' aesthetic reader never becomes an exercitant, but a voyeur: reading is living vicariously, for the sheer pleasure of it.[255] For Barthes, reading gains its pleasure by being able to ignore the seriousness of Loyola's intentions.[256] In the aesthetic mode, pleasure is maintained by keeping the text bracketed from life by quotation marks. Enacting the text, then, is to make those words mine: to dequote. But this is not something necessary for reading poems: it is a logical difference, a different way of using poetic language. But I do not mean 'use' in a practical sense here: to dequote is to believe in those words, and to believe in something is not a logical choice – we have reasons to believe, but these are not logical reasons, they are experiences – we *come into* certain beliefs (and also out of them).

Prayer is many aspects a good model for dequoting, since words must be matched with attitudes. Prayer cannot live vicariously, as if another were speaking those words, they must be spoken from the heart. In this sense, prayer is like silent singing: whereas in singing we can hear the interpreter's attitude, in prayer (as in some poems)[257] we cannot. The joy and sadness expressed in religious (addressed to God) gospel and blues music, for example, unites these two forms, yet is a world apart from the silence of cataphatic prayer. It is not the case that St. John's mystical achievements are merely a not-expressing of otherwise felt emotions: mysticism is ineffable because it hits hard against the limits of language and yet accepts this silence. As such - only in this silence – can it be an understanding: as Barthes has said, it is a vision and not a view. It is the unspeakable mix of joy and sadness: mysticism is the experience of contradiction, the poetic analogue of which is paradox and irony.[258] In an analogous manner to which a poem can materially (verbally) manifest the harmony of opposites, God symbolizes the very balance of contradictories.[259] As the mark of such a perfect equilibrium, God serves in religion as the symbol of moral inspiration, the cause and justification of virtue, the attitudinal ether that coheres the strands of a man's character: 'A man inspired by God is a man who has ways of behaviour,

[253] '. . . one identifies oneself with an "Other": nature, or universal reason, as it is present within each individual.' (211)
[254] For Barthes it is not a question 'of praying with Loyola; it is a matter of bringing into our daily life the fragments of the unintelligible ("formulae") that emanate from a text we admire (admire precisely because it hangs together well); it is a matter of speaking this text, not making it act, by allowing it the distance of a citation' (7)
[255] When the Stoics say 'joy', it does not mean 'that the Stoic finds joy in his "self"'. The meaning of *gaudium* transcends the opposition between pleasure and pain (and therefore is not synonymous with pleasure). 'Seneca does not find joy in "Seneca," but by transcending "Seneca".' (PWL 207) This topic holds future work regarding Nussbaum's TD.
[256] '. . . it is a matter of receiving from the text a kind of fantasmatic order: of savoring with Loyola the sensual pleasure of organizing a retreat, of covering our interior time with it, of distributing in it moments of language: the bliss of the writing is barely mitigated by the seriousness of the Ignatian representations). (8)
[257] As we will see, in 'harder' poems the author's attitude is kept from us by a veil of irony.
[258] 'The demonstrable correlation of opposites is an image of the transcendental correlation of contradictories.' (Weil GG 98)
[259] 'What the relation of opposites can do in the approach to the natural being, the unifying grasp of contradictory ideas can do in the approach to God.' (Weil GG 100)

thoughts and feelings which are bound together by a bond impossible to define.' (Weil GG 100) Language, on the other hand, can only show aspects: it is a seeing-as. This tension between language and silence comes together in the synthesis of metaphor and irony.

Richards makes a judgment of value between experiences which promote sound-mindedness, 'through a narrowing of the response with those which widen it.' Most poetry is of the narrowing sort, 'content with the full, ordered development of comparatively special and limited experiences, with a definite emotion, for example, Sorrow, Joy, Pride', etc. Yet these 'are not the greatest kind of poetry'. (233) For the wider kind (related to Auerbach's notion of abstract style), 'the difference is not one of subject but of the reliations *inter se* of the several impulses active in the experience.' These poems are marked by 'the extraordinarily heterogeneity of the distinguishable impulses. But they are more than heterogeneous, they are opposed.' And the criterion for reading these greater kinds of poems is that they must withstand the test of *'ironical contemplation'*.[260] (234) Given that irony 'in this sense consists in the bringing in of the opposite, the complementary impulses', as we saw Stevens' ironmonger fuse red and blue, ironical contemplation is the reading that 'brings into play far more of our personality than is possible in experiences of a more defined emotion.' (235) The metaphor is the formal synthesis of contradiction. This capacity for synthesis is what the Romantics revered in the Imagination.[261] This, in turn - because it is a holistic reading comprising multiply condensed views, and thus gives us *the sense of* a *vision* - requires detachment.[262] 'And to say that we are *impersonal* is merely a curious way of saying that our personality is more *completely* involved.' (235) Because a mask implies an absence, we are freer to respond. This stands within the logic of mysticism: and perhaps now we can understand that Nussbaum's project misreads attention because she only focuses on the novel.[263] Although this is a rather crude notion, poems, comparatively small and dense things, immediately (perceptively) give us a far more comprising sense of 'meaning' and thus presence (*ousia)*: like a ball, we can turn them round as a whole.

For Loyola, the reader that is wandering smoke is not lost: he is bound to a vast array of images, but which are nonetheless of a specific type: Christian; just as the true mystic, for Bossuet, must be bound to a Christian grammar. The articulation of language maintains aboutness, restricting the subject to a totality of relevance. Without this grammar, there would be no circumspection and the exercitant's participation would only amount to curious aloofness, in a Heideggerian sense. Loyola's imitation is the textual equivalent of the Eucharist, where the body of Christ is symbolized in a fragment of bread and incorporated into individual members of the

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[260] 'The difference comes out clearly if we consider how comparatively unstable poems of the first kind are. They will not bear an ironical contemplation.' (Richards 234)

[261] Richards cites Coleridge's 'greatest contribution to literary theory' as his account of the imagination: "That synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination . . . reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities'. (227, in *Bibliographia Literaria*, II: 12)

[262] 'To respond, not through one narrow channel of interest, but simultaneously and coherently through many, is to be *disinterested* in the only sense of the word which concerns us here. A state of mind which is not disinterested is one which sees things only from one standpoint or under one aspect. At the same time since more of our personality is engaged the independence and individuality of other things becomes greater. We seem to see "all round" them, to see them as they really are; we see them apart from any one particular interest which they may have for us.' (Richards 235)

[263] Of itself this is of course not a problem: I am exclusively focusing on poems. Nussbaum includes this disclaimer: 'I find in a short story sufficient structural complexity for the issues I am investigating [in LK]. Lyric poetry seems to me to raise different issues.' (LK 46) The problem is metonymical, of slippage into a general attitude towards literature, which I believe is patent in her rejection of universals.

community, themselves parts of the Church.[264] Barthes compares the Buddhist mode of concentrating on mantras, pure form, to the Christian contemplation of a meaningful word: 'But whereas for the Buddhist nominal concentration should produce a vacuum, Ignatius recommends an exploration of all the signifieds of a single noun in order to arrive at a whole; he wants to wrest from the form the whole gamut of its meanings and thereby extenuate the subject - this subject which in our terminology is endowed with a pleasing ambiguity, since it is simultaneously *quaestio* and ego, object and agent of the discourse.' (59-60) Whereas for Barthes this ambiguity is pleasant, for Weil it is afflictive. The difference is that Weil moves between words and reticence, between beauty and necessity,[265] whereas Barthes distances himself from the latter kind precisely by keeping his distance through citation. For the former, beauty imitates life, for the latter, we imitate beauty. Yet there is the possibility of a sequence of thought here, not necessarily a break – and although the aesthete will not commit to necessity because he has (following Aristotle's logical distinction of the imagination) separated himself from it citationally (lives in the Theatre), Weil agrees to the latter term provided the first is met. Again, for ethics to subsist within art, a sense of necessity must exist in the poet or reader.

Necessity for the Stoics moves beyond a mere concern with duty and fate, as most modern philosophy charges: it points toward the very question of *logos* as constitutive of human nature,[266] and 'being' as constitutive of existence. The meaning of being is to be found by the mode of inquiry proper to Dasein,[267] which is in turn defined by *logos*. Ontology does not statically work within a hermeneutical circle but moves more like a spiral 'because in answering this question [of the meaning of being] it is not a matter of grounding by deduction, but rather of laying bare and exhibiting the ground.' (H8) Necessity is intuited (Aristotle's lesson in philosophical wisdom) from all our particular evidence and real-world experiences, but is in itself nothing particular. Yet it can be investigated, asked about: this produces not a circular reasoning but rather 'a notable "relatedness backward or forward" of what is asked about (being) [Sein] to asking as a mode of being of a being.' Poetic attention is intrinsic to this motion because the 'way what is questioned essentially engages our questioning belongs to the innermost meaning of the question of being. But this only means that the being that has the character of Dasein has a relation to the question of being itself, perhaps even a distinctive one.' (H8)

This is why the logothetes ultimately hit upon a questioning that only returns silence: like Ashbery they are not stating, they are insisting upon modes of contemplating the question itself,

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[264] The Eucharist is another example of St. Basil's communion of mind, with bread becomes a symbol illustrated by the words "The body of Christ. – Amen.", and where the proper use of the icon lies in the contemplative attention of the participant to the act, which is to remember (relive in the imagination) the passion of Christ. The Nicene Creed, also an important part of the Christian liturgy, is also a text that unifies, as participants pray aloud, or sing, in unison.

[265] 'The beautiful in nature is a union of the sensible impression and of the sense of necessity. Things must be like that (in the first place), and, precisely, they are like that.' (Gravity and Grace 148)

[266] 'In the mentality of modern historians, there is no cliché more firmly anchored, and more difficult to uproot, than the idea according to which ancient philosophy was an escape mechanism, an act of falling back upon oneself. In the case of the Platonists, it was an escape into the heaven of ideas, into the refusal of politics in the case of the Epicureans, into the submission to fate in the case of the Stoics [whereas it] is one and the same wisdom which conforms itself to cosmic wisdom and to the reason in which human beings participate.' (Hadot 274)

[267] 'Thus to work out the question of being means to make a being – one who questions [i.e. Dasein] – transparent in its being.' (H7)

God, the (mythical, theological, logothetical) meaning of being.[268] The self becomes the locus of an investigation, as the exercitant acts out the *quaestio*: the quest that is a question. Barthes is thus driven to recognize the boundaries of the first principles of oracular communication: where desire (petition) and reason (articulated grammar) cross paths – the point of axiomatic belief in Hill's poem – is where reticence lies. In following the threads of Loyola's grammatical constraints, the responsive mark of the divine is created by dramatic suspense that sustains the continuation *ad infinitum* of Loyola's quest once the Passion becomes a play to interpret. The success of the actor to maintain the expectations on which drama depends is what allows the play to survive.[269] Barthes' aestheticism is thus a voyeurism of Loyola's repeated acts (also in the theatrical sense) of prayer. In Christian prayer, words may act to summon the spirit of Christ for the self to inhabit. This phantasm is engendered from within a density of images, which make their sense through oppositions. In Loyola, Christ is identified by opposition to Lucifer, and so on, in a whole network (a tree) of oppositions.[270] This tree constitutes the code's grammar, which was built to petition God's election, and which is sub-divided into themes or topics which provide a pre-defined aboutness for thinking.[271] Barthes' conception of Text is of a machinery pre-built with canals or branches – a structure that streams desire through established linguistic or imagetic paths that thus *constrain the imaginative possibilities* that are expected to deliver a result.

These constraints on oracular possibilities constitute knowledge, in the sense that they conform discourse, give it meaning. On the topic of inspiration, Brooks and Warren remind us that there are specific trainings: only 'poets dream up poems, and only scientists dream up scientific discoveries.' Given a certain mood and conditions, when trained lips speak, they will more probably produce a certain kind of outcome.[272] *Lysis* preceding *crisis*, Wordsworth claims to initiate his writing only once a distinct purpose is at hand, for 'habits of meditations have so formed my feelings, as that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a purpose . . . For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' (8) As Weil has said on contemplation, thought is present alongside the desire to speak of a powerful impact.[273]

Constraint is a negative force: as such, training will not tell us what but what not to say. This says much the same as the doctrine of grace, whereby action is improvisation that will always be good provided evil is kept at bay. 'There is a way of giving our attention to the data of a

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[268] 'Thus, if Sade, Fourier, and Loyola are founders of a language, and only that, it is precisely in order to say nothing, to observe a vacancy (if they wanted to say something, linguistic language, the language of communication and philosophy, would suffice: they could be summarized, which is not the case with any one of them).' (6)

[269] Loyola depends on the *pathos* permitted by dramatic structure: 'although the story of Christ is known and contains no anecdotal surprise, it is still possible to dramatize its repercussions by reproducing in oneself the form of suspense, making the belated or uncertain shadow disappear; when he recites the Life of Christ, the exercitant must not hurry, he must exhaust each Station, do each Exercise without reference to its successor, not allow to arise to soon, out of order, the emotions of consolation, in short, he must respect the suspense of feelings'. (61)

[270] '. . . the second Week is regulated by the opposition of two reigns, two standards . . . that of Christ and that of Lucifer, whose attributes counter each other one to one; every sign of excellence unerringly determines the mold where it structurally takes support in order to signify: the wisdom of God and my ignorance, His omnipotence and my weakness'. (56)

[271] A form pre-existent to any invention, the topic is a grill, a tablature of cases through which the subject to be treated (the *questio*) is guided: this methodical contact produces the idea - or at least its inception, which the syllogism will be charged with prolonging almost mechanically. Thus the topic contains all the wonders of an arsenal of latent powers.' (58)

[272] This is another version of Epictetus' idea that we need only follow a general rule.

[273] Thus the poet is the man who 'being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply.' (Wordsworth 9)

problem of geometry, without trying to find the solution or to the words of a Latin or Greek text without trying to arrive at the meaning'. This is 'a way of waiting, when we are writing, for the right word to come of itself at the end of our pen, while we merely reject all inadequate words.' (Weil, Waiting for God 63) This way of waiting, this capacity to contemplate a problem at hand, is what Weil defends is the sole purpose of studies.[274] As I have been suggesting, this ability for fixing our attention upon a problem and patiently waiting for an answer is what the Stoics pursue in *ataraxia* as a technique of perception. In regards to poetry, Brooks and Warren note the same negative process in inspiration. As in ethics, perceiving (the general direction of) the aesthetic good we call 'beautiful' is a question of sensing what is bad. In a letter[275] to an admirer asking how the poet always found the right word, Housman replied that 'he didn't bother about trying to get the right word, he simply bothered about getting rid of the wrong one.' (Brooks 476)

This critical sense that discerns and filters out what is wrong, I have been suggesting, operates like shame in moral perception. There is an emotional reaction due to a perception of wrongness, which can be felt as a sort of violation of what the poet idealizes.[276] Both cases of moral and aesthetic perception are, however, forms of attention, although to different things and constrained by different kinds of persons. Yet all proceed from the same ability - which grows through experience and training, thus making attention both a means and an end. If the concept just signified sense perception, it would simply be a means. It is because we can learn to attend better that it also encompasses a sense of finality, making attention a skill, not simply a faculty. But better (the comparison that determines that one of the terms is relatively 'well') implies, as Ryle claims, thinking.[277] 'Better' and 'well', more than just abstract value, imply some form of knowledge that may substantiate a critical attitude. 'Should' is based upon the detection of, and veering away from, 'bad'. But 'knowledge' in art is not like 'knowledge' in science; there seem to be no artistic laws but only trends. Standards of beauty depend on the impact certain effects have on audiences and how these continue to admire and share certain works. Artworks survive or die depending on the kind of attention granted to them. They do not simply require recognition of objective presence: their full reality – as ours - is constituted in and by care. Poetic attention is fundamentally this care - which can take various forms and nuances - for the words in a poem, the particular beings that are poems. That attention to poems is grounded in care can be seen in our reactions to what we deem bad art. Very simply, if we find an artwork boring, we doom it to phenomenological oblivion, as we have seen with James.

Understanding art is mostly a case of experience. The rationale of the rules we have been speaking of, within the Stoic scope of *logos* as existential necessity or universal reason, is mostly of this order: they spring from life.[278] We are not talking of scientific rules whereby technology gains

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[274] 'Our first duty toward school children and students is to make known this method to them, not only in a general way but in the particular form that bears on each exercise.' (Weil, Waiting for God 63)

[275] Letter to Arnold Stein, August 22, 1935.

[276] 'And in the end, if a poet feels that a poem doesn't represent him, that it does violence to his ideas, etc., he can always burn the poem instead of publishing it.' (Brooks 476)

[277] 'Thinking is no one department in a department-store, such that we can ask What line of goods does it provide . . . Its proper place is in all the departments'. Thinking is the general mode of activity we might express in the expression "*the using of our wits*" - which we can do in 'swimming, singing, hammering, or in anything else whatsoever.' (Ryle 281)

[278] 'The object of our search should not be the supernatural, but the world itself. The supernatural is light itself: if we make an object of it we lower it.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 130)

its power to control necessity: philosophical wisdom is existentially grounded as obedience to necessity, and this ultimately means finding our own individual freedom, our role within the whole. The rules of thumb we have are those we glean from our very own experiences in life, which gain an added value of meaningfulness for being experienced.[279] Resuming an Aristotelian argument,[280] Brooks & Warren say that 'we may have a child chess champion or musical prodigy, but not a child literary critic or dramatist.' (9) Life itself teaches us: again, by developing us as a whole, our character.[281] When deciding upon the title of their book, these authors were undecided as to whether to call it Understanding Poetry or Experiencing Poetry but chose the former because it emphasizes the process. Making the same point as Bossuet, they complain that while the experience of poetry – its joy - is 'an end to be gained . . . some people assume that no preparation, no effort, no study, no thought, is necessary for that experience'. The reason for eliding this determination is the same as why meditation is ignored by the false mystics, for when we are 'deeply affected' by a poem 'the experience seems to come with total immediacy . . . with the ease of a revelation.' (15)

The issue of reading poems for sheer pleasure, or whatever emotions, comes down to Aristotle's point on experience that whilst 'people are thought to have by nature judgement, understanding, and intuitive reason', 'no one is thought to be a philosopher by nature.' (1143a) Specializations require particular experiences: and it is these that constitute the specific knowledge of the field. And so too fruitful readings of poems require 'not merely the experience of life but of poetry.' (Brooks 15) What matters in the end is that the reader should be aware that the negative skill of contemplation (of retracting from distractions to listen in silence to the poem) depends on the positive skill of meditation, for 'mere immersion does little good unless the reader is making, however unconsciously, some discriminations, comparisons, and judgments; if he merely wallows in a vague pleasurable reaction, the immersion can mean little or nothing.' (16) For as the poem is evaluated against our experience, in contrast to our thoughts and reactions, both ideas of it and myself change and deepen. But it is only so when a poem talks to us and we to it, which is a rather specific event of me speaking (someone else's) words (someone who is not there) as mine. Meaningfulness resides in the presence of a being, and poems are very particular beings. The sense of better – the discerning sensibility that constitutes 'attention' - is intuitive because in life we are constantly reacting to events or contexts which are intrinsically complex. If we were forced to analyze every string attached, it would take us forever to react. So we take them on the whole. The more details we can, however, perceptively assimilate, the more attentive we are considered to be. The term attention is helpful because it implicitly makes us think of perception, which is always of something (we pay attention to beings). Attention is not free-floating, it must always be grounded – as such, it is grounding.

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[279] In opposition to 'the great bustling practical business of the world or in contrast to the vast body of organized knowledge which science is and which allows man to master, to a certain degree, nature and his own fate,' which is the main concern of the practical man and the They, the 'fields of feeling and attitude may seem to be "merely personal" and "merely subjective," . . . [but] we may realize that all the action and knowledge in the world can be valuable only as these things bring meaning to life – to our particular lives especially.' (Brooks 8-9)

[280] Aristotle notes how judgment is a case of intuition because it takes both particulars (from our experience) and universals (ideas, developed from prior experience) into account: 'intuitive reason is concerned with the ultimates in both directions' (NE 1143a)

[281] 'Therefore we ought to attend to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced and older people . . . for because experience has given them an eye they see aright.' (1143b)

But in the case of divination, the result is lacking, at least in verbal form: Loyola's entire enterprise in the *Exercises* has been to petition the Lord with prayer given a conundrum of practical choice. The answer is an assent.[282] God is not expected to speak, but silently mark the right choice: the exercitant prepares the path for the attribution of meaning, which God signals out.[283] To be sure that the answer is divine, the exercitant must himself pull away from the act of choosing and present God with a balance, with requires an attitude of indifference toward the alternatives.[284] Thus Loyola's 'I' becomes reticent expectation. Instead of a destruction of desire, as Nussbaum reproves, the Stoic *will for indifference* becomes the disciplined precondition for a posterior listening to a different kind of desire: the resoluteness that keeps one within authenticity.[285] The nullification of desire toward practical alternatives - choice - becomes a way of silencing expectations (a matter of habit and entanglement, i.e. distractions) so that proper attention to the authentic ('true') self can take place. (The Skeptics called this technique *isostheneia*, which as we shall see, plays a major role in the disclosure of contradictions.) Yet what sustains the practice of *procheiron* and *epode*, of prayer and poetry, is language. As a voice which the self attempts to hear within itself (and which the oracle purported to mediate in his mantic art), Loyola's mantic structure, Heidegger shows, is manifest in the everyday phenomenon of conscience.

## Conscience

For Heidegger, three equiprimordial elements found disclosedness in general, and the phenomenon of conscience in particular: understanding, mood and discourse. (Cf. H295-6) Within the scope of conscience, *understanding* is essentially the response to the call, the desire to *listen* to the original – undistorted - meaning of a being.[286] The *mood* of conscience is essentially *uncanniness* in the world: the anxiety that arises out of conscience's fundamental state of being-guilty.[287] The *discourse* of conscience is what I have been equating with the silent language of *nous* - for which the Christian version is 'the heart' - and which justifies the absence of reply in prayer: what is 'spoken' is silent reticence.[288] They all participate in the role of 'conscience' as the unspoken caller toward

[282] 'In mantic art, the divinity, faced with the alternative offered by the questioner, in like manner concedes one of the terms: that is its answer.' (72)
[283] 'In the Ignatian system, paradigms are given by the discernment, but only God can mark them: the generator of meaning, but not its preparer, He is, structurally, the Marker, he who imparts a difference.' (72)
[284] 'This indifference is a virtuality of possibles which one works to make equal in weight, as though one were to construct an extremely sensitive scale on which one would place materials constantly being brought into balance, so that the arm leans neither to one side nor to the other'. (73)
[285] 'Resoluteness is an eminent mode of the disclosedness of Dasein . . . Now, in resoluteness the most primordial truth of Dasein has been reached, because it is *authentic*. The disclosedness of the there discloses equiprimoridally the whole of the being-in-the-world – the world, being-in, and the self that is this being as "I am."' (H297)
[286] 'Conscience attests not by making something known in an undifferentiated way, but by a summons that calls forth to being-guilty. What is thus attested to is "grasped" in the hearing which understands the call without distortion in the sense it has itself intended. Understanding the summons, as a mode of *being* of Dasein, first gives the phenomenal content of what is attested in the call of conscience. We characterized authentically understanding the call as wanting to have a conscience.' (H295)
[287] 'What mood corresponds to such understanding? Understanding the call discloses one's own Dasein in the uncanniness of its individuation.' (H295)
[288] 'The call introduces the fact of constantly being-guilty and thus brings the self back from the idle chatter of the they's common sense. Thus the mode of articulative discourse belonging to wanting to have a conscience is *reticence*.' (H296)

authenticity (in anxious contrast to the inauthentic being of the They). It is an understanding ('whoever wants to give something to understand in silence must "have something to say") that, as a summons, 'Dasein gives itself to understand its ownmost potentiality-of-being. Thus this calling is a keeping silent.' (H296)

Socrates' account of conscience is more like a myth, like *epode*. In the *Greater Hippias*, Socrates ironically tells the sophist Hippias that unlike him, he cannot accept that *epode*, 'an eloquent and beautiful speech' should 'win the day in a law court' and thus be admired for its (wrong yet beautiful) efficacy, since he is 'called every kind of bad name by some sort of audience, including especially that man who is always cross-questioning me.' (304d) The elements of objectivity and shame (to imagine an audience is at least to have a conception of 'world') that St. Antony finds useful in the practice of writing encounters its 'oral' equivalent in the self-reflexive voice that is commonly taken to go on "inside our heads", and which Socrates allegorizes as a housemate that constantly questions him.[289] The questioning, a soliloquy between opposing views, is what brings out the fact that the opinion might be unfounded.[290] It is in this methodological sense that in the end 'The *Exercises* is the book of the question, not of the answer.' (74) To know whether something is beautiful (or good), Socrates defends, is to be found from the ground, or person, up: by intuition, not deduction.[291]

Thus, from the perspective of the realist (and the mystic alike), aesthetic (citatory) distancing from conscience is escapism.[292] Socrates' seriousness (or philosophical wisdom) is not revealed in any particular final answer but in the humble way he heeds his 'housemate' and is open to his questioning. For Heidegger, conscience is a call, not (as popular belief or certain interpretations of Stoicism have it) a sort of judge advocating adherence to particular laws. Heidegger focuses on how guilt summons one into authenticity, but not in terms of any specific action that should be carried out. 'Conscience calls the self of Dasein forth from its lostness in the they.' (H274) Guilt reveals the uncanniness of being lost in idle chatter, and thus the call that summons the self to authenticity is made in silence.[293] Silence is also the product of Loyola's petitional efforts, a silence which must be respected.[294] As the They jump between novelties and externalities, Dasein is lost (and this is our common, everyday mode) in listening to idle chatter. In finding itself, Dasein grants itself 'the possibility of another kind of hearing that interrupts that listening'. (H271) But this, once again returning us to the ineffable element in poetic attention, involves going through contradiction. 'All true good carries with it conditions which are contradictory and as a consequence is impossible. He who keeps his attention really fixed on this

[289] 'He is a very close relative of mine and lives in the same house, and when I go home and he hears me give utterance to these opinions he asks me whether I am not ashamed of my audacity in talking about a beautiful way of life, when questioning makes it evident that I do not even know the meaning of the word "beauty".' (304d)

[290] 'Method of investigation: as soon as we have thought something, try to see in what way the contrary is true.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 102)

[291] Socrates' conscience 'goes on, how can you know whose speech is beautiful or the reverse – and the same applies to any action whatsoever – when you have no knowledge of beauty? And so long as you are what you are, don't you think that you might as well be dead?' (304e)

[292] 'As if Dasein were a "household" whose indebtedness only needed to be balanced out in an orderly way for the self to be able to stand "by" as an uninvolved spectator as these experiences run their course.' (H293)

[293] 'The call speaks in the uncanny mode of *silence*. And it does this only because in calling the one summoned, it does not call him into the public idle chatter of the they, but *calls* him *back* from that *to the reticence of his existent potentiality-of-being*.' (H277)

[294] 'This last lecture, the final and difficult fruit of ascesis, is *respect*, the reverential acceptance of God's silence, the assent given not to the sign, but to the sign's delay.' (Barthes 75)

impossibility and acts will do what is good.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 98) Barthes also enters into this paradox, which will sustain the theme of poetic attention in later Heidegger (Ch.4): 'Hearing turns into its own answer, and from being suspensive, the interrogation becomes somehow assertive, question and answer enter into a tautological balance: the divine sign finds itself completely absorbed in its hearing.' (75) For Heidegger, this apparent absence of a caller that is produced in self-reflexivity evidences that what is listened to is the calling as a summons.[295] Heidegger's metaphor of listening to the authentic instead of the inauthentic Dasein is matched by changing one's attitude (*metanoia*) from an expectation for a statement - since we 'miss a "positive" content in what is called because we expect to be told something actually useful about assured possibilities of "action" that are available and calculable.' (H294) – into the abovementioned respect for reticence (that is the mystical language of the heart). Poetic seriousness involves this 'wanting to have a conscience' that constitutes the authentic understanding of the call (H295): the poet seeks his own voice. And this is a matter of thinking.[296]

These accounts of conscience provide a structural blueprint for thinking inspiration. Roquentin's call, however, was a tune. What is fundamental to an understanding of inspiration is that there is a mode of discourse – in our case, 'poetic' - that need not itself be silent, but that must *proceed from* ('abiding provenance I would have said') a reticent listening. So Heidegger's later version of 'conscience' is the, *now mythological*, 'draft'.[297] The draft summons the poet, who has the role of resolutely standing within its groundless abyss, a position which presupposes a prior turning, a perceptive *metanoia* of listening to one's inner voice.[298] The poet's courageous release into the draft, which is the singular point of origin of language, is what gives meaning to *ataraxia* and faith in the oracular domain.[299] It is a listening and speaking of that listening.[300] This is work: citing Rilke, Heidegger says the poets 'are the bees of the invisible.' (WPF 130) The bees built our hive: language, 'the precint *(templum),* that is, the house of Being.' (132)

'Literature is the most complicated language that man has invented for talking not only to others but to himself; or rather, it is the language he has invented so that he may be himself.' (Brooks 9) That the poet takes his *quaestio* seriously means that it 'is a necessary part of the poet's nature that, before he can truly be a poet in such an age, the time's destitution must have made the whole being and vocation of the poet a poetic question for him. Hence "poets in a destitute time"',

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[295] 'The peculiar indefiniteness and indefinability of the caller are not nothing, but a positive distinction. It lets us know that the caller uniquely coincides with summoning to ... , that it wants to be heard only as such, and not be chattered about any further.' (H275)

[296] 'True, at this moment in the world's history we have first to learn that the making of poetry, too, is a matter of thinking. Let us take the poem as an exercise in poetic self-reflection.' (WPF 99-100)

[297] The tone is patently mythical and mystical. 'Poets are the mortals who, singing earnestly of the wine-god, sense the trace of the fugitive gods, stay on the gods' tracks, and so trace for their kindred mortals the way towards the turning. The ether, however, in which alone the gods are gods, is their godhead. The element of this ether, that within which even the godhead itself is still present, is the holy.' (WPF 94)

[298] 'It may be that any other salvation than that which comes from *where the* danger is, is still within the unholy . . . an unsubstantial illusion . . . The salvation must come from where there is a turn with mortals in their nature . . . Those, then, who are at times more venturesome can will more strongly only if their willing is different in nature.' (WPF 118-9)

[299] 'To be secure is to repose safely within the drawing of the whole draft. The daring that is most venturesome, willing more strongly than any self-assertion, because it is willing, "creates" a secureness for us in the Open. To create means to fetch from the source.' (WPF 120)

[300] 'And to fetch from that source means to take up what springs forth and to bring what has so been received.' (WPF 120)

which is our own time when poetry questions itself, 'must especially gather in poetry the nature of poetry.' (WPF 94)

The elements we have been discussing all enter into Hill's vision of singing, where 'getting it right' is a question ('that stands') of sensibility ('of sensuous intelligence'); which generates joy as the poem begins to form (as knowledge, some initially projected idea of a thinking craftily dedicated to the materiality of words, begins 'entering into the work'). This 'spontaneous happiness' that emerges as the work proceeds, that is born within this present being, a being in language, has its own provenance: a listening to, a primitive mode of attention to words that has the capacity to awake us from our sleeping nature: 'the innocence of first inscription'. Line 12 says we are awakened by this original (in time and creativity) way of writing that is poetry. Line 13 inscribes 'and know': set off to the right margin, the word farthest off, also a way of awakening. Poetry, Hill would, might, say, is also a mode of thinking – a liminal one, perhaps, related to birth and awakening, as set against death. Yet by having initially indicated that this primitive listening to words is provisional ('I would have said'), Hill claims that he is imagining this. Or at any rate, that this saying is not quite the normal kind of saying - not a statement of fact, at least. Although Hill announces that to abide provenance reason and desire participate in the same loop (verse 6); the actual loop that is indicated in the following verse plays with three words: 'I imagine singing I imagine'. Since, as I have said, the loop is incomplete, this sets the reader off in playful grouping of different clausal possibilities: 'I imagine' / 'imagine singing' / 'imagine singing I' / 'singing I' / and finally 'singing I imagine'. Let us now turn from the 'I' to 'imagine', before we turn to singing in Ch.4.

# Chapter 3 – Attention & Perception

## Presence and *anima*: being and beings

"Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams

So much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

When Brooks and Warren read "Red Wheelbarrow", they note how on 'this image a strangely acute and puzzling sort of attention is brought to bear', for it looks like 'an ordinary prose sentence broken up in a peculiar way', which makes us 'focus our attention upon words, mere words, in a special way'. Even its couplets of 3 words and one word long create an added sense of strangeness because they play with symmetry, and thus suggest, by the very fact that a pattern is present, a covert intention, manifested formally. By hinting at veiled intentions, poems set themselves up as a special use of words. Its use of words gives this poem 'a puzzling portentousness, the sort . . . that any object, even the simplest and most ordinary (in this case the wheelbarrow), assumes when we fix attention exclusively on it and cut it off from the rest of the world.' (73) This exclusive focus (which abstracts a single being from its worldly context) 'endows it with an exciting freshness that seems to hover on the verge of revelation.' (74)

Sight, our most used sense, is commonly taken in ordinary language as a metaphor for understanding meaning ('I see what you mean.'); in the realist tradition, however, it also stands for disclosure.[301] Williams' poem banks on this understanding of contemplative perception, since this sense of revelation is what 'the poem is actually about: "So much depends . . ." But', the critics continue, 'what depends, we don't know.' An expectation for disclosure is thematically set at the beginning. Something similar to Roquentin's bedazzlement with the tune is occurring: the common element is pure intuition, '*legein* itself, or *noein* – the simple apprehension of something objectively present in its sheer objective presence'. (H25) This mode of access to 'genuine beings' means that we interpret them 'with regard to the present; that is to say, they are conceived as presence (*ousia*).' From this point of view, the wheelbarrow seems to become a symbol of presence. The conception that the genuine mode of access to beings stands within a bracketed eternal present, abstracted

[301] "'Seeing" not only does not mean perceiving with the bodily eyes, neither does it mean the pure, nonsensory perception of something objectively present in its objective presence. The only peculiarity of seeing which we claim for the existential meaning of sight is the fact that it lets the beings accessible to it be encountered in themselves without being concealed.' (H147)

from the rest of time is, for Heidegger, the major fault in ancient ontology's misunderstanding of time.[302]

Indeed, Stoic training for 'delimiting the present'[303] seems to segment a portion of time out of time. 'He who sees the present has seen all things, both all that has come to pass from everlasting and all that will be for eternity: all things are related and the same. (Marcus Aurelius 6,37) This essential cosmic oneness seems somehow to be depicted in Williams' wheelbarrow. By becoming the focus of all our attention, it takes on the aspect of the world as a whole: it comes to stand for everything because it is the only thing there and, as a poem, it calls for an understanding of meaning in a special, i.e. undetermined, way. Indeed, in this Stoic exercise, the past and future are eliminated on account of being distractions.[304] Yet it would be reckless to accuse Stoicism of having collapsed into a Quietist attitude of the eternal present. Stoicism abounds in many other exercises, namely in the forward-looking preparation for death.[305] This 'delimitation' is to be regarded as not only as the training of a skill (whereby the practice of scales is not an end in itself), but also as a grounding in life.[306] As an attentional strategy, it means to do away with the cause of unnecessary distress by learning to concentrate only on what is actually real at the time, thereby eliminating the *fictional* phantasms of memory and expectation. Again, realism is the purpose of Marcus Aurelius' meditation. Notwithstanding, the wheelbarrow indeed *seems* to stand for existence itself, it appears-as presence.

Yet perhaps it is not meant to stand for, be about, presence, but simply itself: *that* red wheelbarrow. In that case we would be standing before the (call onto the) poet's belief that the poet should (as Ashbery has said) try to avoid ideas. The tone certainly indicates this, for the poem ends in a very deflated way: this thing is right there next to the chickens. This in turn denotes a certain poetics, a philosophical delimitation of the poet's aesthetics, an ethical stance regarding how the world should be thought and shown - so that it can be read as shown, and therefore understood and thought thusly. (A style conveys an entire form of thought.)[307] Yet this belief in the 'mere' presentation of beings presents us with the problem of what counts as a 'thing in itself'. As the critics have said, what 'depends' is indeterminate: 'Beings can show themselves from themselves in various ways, depending on the mode of access to them. The possibility even exists that they can show themselves as they are not in themselves. In this self-showing beings "look like . . ." Such self-showing we call seeming.' (H28) The problem is that phenomena are dependent not

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[302] This 'Greek interpretation of being comes about without . . . understanding the fundamental ontological function of time . . . time itself is taken to be one being among others.

[303] Marcus Aurelius called this spiritual exercise "delimiting the present" and prayed to himself, 'in order to concentrate [his attention] upon what one is in the process of doing: 'This is enough for you.' (Hadot 227)

[304] These tenses are regarded as a source of externals in the sense that we cannot control them, and as such are often a source of concern and anguish (what we should have done, what we must face, etc.).

[305] 'Those are the reflections you should recur to morning and night. Start with things that are least valuable and most liable to be lost - things such as a jug or a glass - and proceed to apply the same ideas to clothes, pets, livestock, property; then to yourself, your body, your body's part, your children, your siblings and your wife. Look on every side and mentally discard them. Purify your thoughts, in case of an attachment or devotion to something that doesn't belong to you and will hurt to have wrenched away. And as you exercise daily, as you do at the gym, do not say that you are philosophizing (admittedly a pretentious claim) but that you are a slave presenting your emancipator; because this is genuine freedom you cultivate.' (Epictetus 4,1,111)

[306] 'Care is being-toward-death.' (H329)

[307] There would be a lot to say on this account. But let it suffice to say 'that there is, with respect to any text carefully written and fully imagined, an organic connection between its form and its content', that 'shaping the words is a matter of finding the appropriate and, so to speak, the honorable, fit between conception and expression.' (Nussbaum LK 4-5)

only on beings, but on our account of them.[308] Attention is the term where both meet, for to pay attention is in a primordial sense to give mind, to enter into a phenomenal relation. The 'communicative bridge' that St. Basil saw in language also exists in perception – but when we recognize this, to use such a metaphor as a bridge seems wrong, for we do not perceive the world a world apart. Attention is being there (Da-sein), with the being.

Aristotle's investigation of the soul in *De Anima* revolves around perception, and is grounded in the different modes of innerworldly beings. Aristotle's view is holistic from the start: body and soul are composite parts of a particular being.[309] Yet what actualizes (*energeia*) the matter, putting the substance (*ousia*) to use is *psyche*, which means the 'principle of animation' (and in Latin translates as *anima*). This sense of a being's energy, an essence that fulfills a use proper to that being, indicates that the soul is the intrinsic end of the body (*entelecheia*).[310] Meeting its end is meeting its function, or form; for without form a being is soulless.[311] Since function is what constrains a being to its possibilities - its potentialities as well as its limits –, the soul is the form of the body.[312] Aristotle's definition of the soul in general thus runs, 'substance in accordance with the account of the thing.' (412b)

Given his view that beings are composites, the difference between body and soul is what one might call a descriptive one, a matter of perspective. An axe, for example, is shaped for its purpose, its body meets its use: if we only describe the matter, we would still be at a loss as to what this being is for, and if we only described its use we would wonder at what it looked like. Since Aristotle think of beings already from a holistic point of view, there is no need, in his world, for a Cartesian 'mind' as opposed to a 'body'.[313] Neither is there a fundamental division between the world and the soul.[314] For Aristotle, perception essentially operates as a formal imitation of the world: the soul *makes* a counterpart of the world as it grows. The soul is moldable, and the model for perception is that it operates 'as the wax takes the sign from the ring without the iron and gold – it takes, that is, the gold or bronze sign, but not as gold or bronze.' (424a) Matter stays where it is, but the soul appropriates the form of the perceived being. Perception is thus a matter of being affected, of being impressed.[315] What is important to note is the simple fact that for Aristotle the relation between being and perceived-being is analogical: forms are like beings. This characteristic of Aristotle's theory of perception whereby metaphorical description goes to meet the force of an impact will place it within the realm of poetic discourse.

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[308] "Phenomenology" is comprised by two meanings: "'phenomenon" and "logos," and by establishing the meaning of the word which is the result of their *combination*.' (H28)
[309] 'Every natural body, then, that partakes of life would be a substance, and a substance in the way that a composite is.' (412a)
[310] Lawson-Tancred, the translator of my edition writes that 'This word is used much more frequently in *De Anima* than in any other treatise. Its literal meaning is something like 'intrinsic possession of end' . . . close in sense to *energeia* (actuality).' (p.119)
[311] '. . . soul is substance as the *form* of a natural body which potentially has life, and since this substance is actuality, soul will be the actuality of such a body.' (412a)
[312] 'In the same way, if some tool, say an axe, were a natural body, its substance would be being an axe, and this then would be its soul. And if this were separated from it, it would not continue to be an axe, except homonymously, whereas as it is it is an axe.' (412b)
[313] 'Philosophers nowadays rarely talk about the soul. But they do talk about the mind. In fact, we are so used to talking about the mind, even ordinarily, that it is no longer readily apparent to us that to talk about the mind is to talk about the soul conceived of in a certain way.. . . the notion of soul attacked by Aristotle is the historical ancestor of Descartes's notion of the mind: a Platonist notion of the soul freed of the role to have to animate a body.' (Frede 96-7)
[314] This makes Aristotle a fundamental basis for BT, despite his, Heidegger says, misunderstanding of temporality. (Cf. H26)
[315] 'For perception is being affected in a certain way.' (424a) This view would later sustain the Stoic theory of impressions.

Perception, moreover, is a matter of decreasing differences, of bringing closer. The alteration to the perceptive faculty can only be described analogically: 'the sense faculty is like the actual sense-object - it is affected as being unlike but on being affected it becomes like and is such as what acts on it.' (418a) But closeness is always a matter of form only: the imitation of being *like* something. By touch, we may become hot if we set our hand on the stove, but just as the wax does not become the gold or bronze of the ring, we do not become steel. This distinction between being like a thing and actually being the thing stands at the heart of the modern debate around DA. This logical difference, it is important to note for we shall return to this, is the same as that between being and word, ring and 'ring'. Burnyeat criticizes Sorabji's belief that although Aristotle's thesis maintains that the sense organ takes on form without matter, this was only a necessity of antiquated physiology, of a lack of technology.[316] Burnyeat summarizes Sorabji's ambition in saying that if we 'substitute our own physiology,' we can 'still claim in good conscience to have an Aristotelian theory of perception.' (20) Because for Sorabji matter really is (we now know) a part of perception (there are photons, neurons, etc.), he wishes to secure space for this reading within DA, to scientifically secure it. He thus differentiates sense perception from understanding within Aristotle's account, and claims that for Aristotle the senses do literally take in matter - it is only thought that constitutes exclusively formal perception.[317] Burnyeat, on the other hand, defends that Aristotle's theory of perception as a whole is formal[318] (that Aristotle did not believe that the eye-jelly really went colored) – although that ultimately entails that it is unscientific, since it fails to comply with the Cartesian contribution towards scientific knowledge. So in the end we must 'junk it', and remain Cartesian.[319] (29) I find their dispute, however, to be based on the categorical mistake that the same kind of (scientific) discourse is to be expected and maintained at all times. Yet a prior distinction is to be made in that not everything requires an explanation in these terms.

> 'Burning in effigy. Kissing the picture of one's beloved. That is *obviously not* based on the belief that it will have some specific effect on the object which the picture represents. It aims at satisfaction and achieves it. Or rather: it *aims* at nothing at all; we just behave this way and then we feel satisfied. One could also kiss the name of one's beloved, and here it would be clear that the name was being used as a substitute.' (Wittgenstein, Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough 123)

Art, contrary to science, does not focus on explaining causes but provoking effects. Here, such effects need not even have a precise line of reasoning, nor need one be expected: we do not demand this of music, for example. When Richards comments on the poetry of T.S. Eliot, namely

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316 'It would not have been obvious, with the instruments then available, that the eye-jelly did not go coloured, or the inside of the ear noisy.' (Sorabji 210)

317 'I think the following is what actually happens: initially, the reception of form is something in which the sense-*organ* (*aisthētērion*) engages and is connected with being 'potentially such'. In other words, it involves the literal coloration of the organ of sight. But when Aristotle compares perception with *thought*, he realizes that the desired analogy is only partial. Certainly, when a person thinks of a stone, matter is left behind, because the stone is not in his or her soul, only its form.' (Sorabji 214)

318 Burnyeat traces Aristotle's use of the wax model to illustrate perception back to a polemical move against Plato's *Theaetetus*, where Plato had used it 'to contrast perception with judgement. He had argued that there is no awareness in perception itself', whereas Aristotle now claims that 'perception is awareness, articulate awareness, from the start.' (24)

319 'Having junked it, we are stuck with the mind-body problem as Descartes created it, inevitably and rightly so. The modern functionalist should be grateful to Descartes for having set him the problem to which functionalism is supposed to be a more satisfactory solution than Cartesian dualism. For the moral of this paper's history is that new functionalist minds do not fit into old Aristotelian bodies.' (Burnyeat, Is an Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible? (A Draft) 29)

"The Waste Land" he calls it precisely a "music of ideas".[320] We must recall that to hear music mostly means that 'the pretence of a continuous thread of associations is dropped . . . The poem as a whole may elude us while every fragment, as a fragment, comes victoriously home.' (277) Given the musical nature of this particular poem, an expectation for explanation must be nipped at the bud. Burnyeat's explanation of Aristotelian perception basically states that Aristotle does not really go into a material explanation: he stops short of it because he is essentially concerned with receptivity, with attention, not materiality: 'not merely are there no physiological sufficient conditions for perception to occur, but the only necessary conditions are states of receptivity to sensible form'. (26) These conditions, interestingly enough, are based on the same belief as Aristotle's moral theory in NE, namely that discernment is carried out analogically in respect to a mean. Just as in Stoicism, *ataraxia* and selflessness were regarded as the subtractive way of the *sophron*, so is perception held to be a zero degree: 'transparent eye-jelly . . . intermediate temperature and hardness in the organ of touch. When these have been specified, the material side of the story of perception is complete.' (Burnyeat, Is an Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible? (A Draft) 26)

The same exact view is held by Richards regarding art. Richards moves the focus of aesthetic perception from the harmony ('beauty') that is taken to be in the object (a property) to the conditions of receptivity.[321] Richards' argument is basically one of attention to the self, whereby the 'most important general condition is mental health, a high state of "vigilance"'. The mental health Richards mentions is *sophrosyne*, the virtue of maintaining an inner balance; and thus applying the fundamental belief of the spiritual tradition that beauty and goodness alike result from moral effort,[322] Richards claims that poets are those most apt to appraise existence since they have balanced themselves through attention. For Richards, the poet is the model of aesthetic attention, for the same reasons that the *sophron* is that of moral attention.

> 'The critic . . . is as much concerned with the health of the mind as any doctor with the health of the body. To set up as a critic is to set up as a judge of values . . . For the arts are inevitably and quite apart from any intentions of the artist an appraisal of existence . . . The artist is concerned with the record and perpetuation of the experiences which seem to him the most worth having . . . He is the point at which the growth of the mind shows itself. His experiences, those at least which give value to his work, represent conciliations of impulses which in most minds are still confused, intertrammelled and conflicting. His work is the ordering of what in most minds is disordered.' (55)

Although 'for most people these experiences are infrequent apart from the arts, almost any occasion may give rise to them.' It can be given by different objects, and there is no singular cause

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[320] 'The ideas are of all kinds, abstract and concrete, general and particular, and, like the musician's phrases, they are arranged, not that they may tell us something, but that their effects in us may combine into a coherent whole of feeling and attitude and produce a peculiar liberation of the will. They are there to be responded to, not to be pondered or worked out.' (276)

[321] 'This balanced poise . . . is a general characteristic of all the most valuable experiences of the arts. It can be given by a carpet or a pot or by a gesture as unmistakably as by the Parthenon . . . We must resist the temptation to analyse its cause into sets of opposed characters in the object. As a rule no such analysis can be made. The balance is not in the structure of the stimulating object, it is in the response. By remembering this we escape the danger of supposing that we have found a formula for Beauty.' (Richards 232)

[322] 'The basis of morality, as Shelley insisted, is laid not by preachers but by poets. Bad taste and crude responses are not mere flaws in an otherwise admirable person. They are actually a root evil from which other defects follow. No life can be excellent in which the elementary responses are disorganized and confused.' (Richards 55-6)

or property for finding a poem beautiful.[323] And whilst the first condition for this state of equilibrium is attention, 'the next is the frequent occurrence of such experiences in the recent past.' His argument is formative: aesthetic experience, which Richards links to the contemplative, i.e. 'impersonality, disinterestedness and detachment', further promotes, of itself, the development of equipoise. 'None of the effects of art is more transferable than this balance or equilibrium.' (232) Richards thus concludes that the *epode* has therapeutic value, that art has good effects for your soul provided it is rightly perceived. Yet there are all sorts of poems, with different reading requirements, which also entail different experiences from the reader, some of which may be more readily available or not at all, or be more elusive, depending on the reader. Some poems try to destroy the very idea of 'meaning' or even of 'language', as when William Burroughs cut up and randomly reassembled his Naked Lunch.[324] The purpose of the words, as in "The Waste Land" for example, may be another, of allusion. Be this as it may, a first reading of an ambiguous poem (and practically all good ones are) will always make us think, and often think hard.[325] But the very act of attention, comprising thinking, means that we may grow, in all senses.[326] The hardest poems will only open up as a whole, i.e. for the *joy* of contemplation, once this meditative work is accomplished. Then we may reread them in pleasure. 'The critical question in all cases is whether the poem is worth the trouble it entails.' (Richards 275) A good poem must permit for these two moments of *lysis* and *crisis*, Stoic vigilance and Epicurean enjoyment, Christian suffering and grace, for the point of meditative thinking and the point of contemplative release that make up the positive and negative attributes of attention.

> 'When all this has been done by the reader, when the materials with which the words are to clothe themselves have been collected, the poem still remains to be read. And it is easy to fail in this undertaking. An "attitude of intellectual suspicion" must certainly be abandoned. But this is not difficult to those who still know how to give their feelings precedence to their thoughts, who can accept and unify an experience without trying to catch it in an intellectual net or to squeeze out a doctrine.' (Richards 275-6)

Although it is the only part the reader is responsible for, the elements participating in a good reading experience cannot obviously all fall upon attention alone. Only good art provokes good effects. And this is also why bad art, as we have seen, can, in the inverse manner, be so dangerous. Inspiration is a question of influence. So let us return to Burnyeat. Burnyeat says that although perception is mostly a case of receiving the form of something without its matter, there is also the case of becoming like the thing both in form and matter, as when something burns.[327] And so 'it follows that receiving the warmth of a warm thing without its matter' means 'registering,

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[323] I would also like to say: 'Be it granted at once, to clear the air, that there are all sorts of experiences involved in the values of the arts, and that attributions of Beauty spring from all sorts of causes.' (Richards 10)

[324] The artistic significance of such an act (of conceptual art) is a valid position in itself, yet it can only be done *once*; as for another example, John Cage's *4'33"*. After that the concept loses all impact – precisely because its meaning (of anti-meaning or of subverting the standard notion of performance) has been used up, like fire.

[325] 'The truth is that very much of the best poetry is necessarily ambiguous in its immediate effect. Even the most careful and responsive reader must read and do hard work before the poem forms itself clearly and unambiguously in his mind.' (Richards 275)

[326] Making the same point as Weil regarding the role of attention in studies, Richards says an 'original poem, as much as a new branch of mathematics, compels the mind which receives it to grow, and this takes time.' (275)

[327] 'Aquinas gives an excellent account of this: when a kettle or a plant gets warmed by the fire, its matter comes to be disposed in a certain way, the same way as the fire already is.' (Burnyeat, Is an Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible? (A Draft) 27)

noticing, or perceiving the warmth without actually becoming warm.' (27) But the first case is one of touch, which Aristotle says is the only one sense that every animal must have and that can provoke death due to excess, i.e. from literally becoming too much like the thing touched (fire, ice, hit by a hammer, etc.).[328] The second case would involve one of the other senses, which are 'not for being that the animal has [them] but for well-being.' (435b) This difference, at once distinguishing survival from value - whilst also placing some distance between the object and the perceiving self is crucial. There is a 'there' implicated in perception. Burnyeat continues to say that if we find this reception of warmth without becoming warm baffling, that is 'because we find it difficult to think of warmth as a reality apart from its material basis - that is, we find it difficult to think of becoming warm as anything other than becoming warm in a material way.' For me, this clearly states the difference between a literal and allegorical reading. Yet for Burnyeat this is meant as a knockdown argument against Aristotle's phenomenological approach, in its disregard for Cartesian preoccupations. Finding it strange (as we moderns should, he implies) 'is our difficulty, not Aristotle's. In his world, it is taken for granted that warmth and red can bring about "effects" which are not effects of the material basis of these qualities.' (27)

Richards' interest in "The Waste Land" calls us back into this vision of the world. Not because we should stop taking Cartesianally-inflected materialism into account as a whole, but because sometimes we should, or are even forced to by the impact of something strange. Poetry takes us back into this mode. We must remember that Aristotle is speaking of the soul; and here talk of effects is not only all important, it is the only talk possible. 'In Aristotle's world the emergence of life does not require explanation. For Aristotle it is the existence of life which explains why animals have the physical constitutions they do, not the other way round.' (25) This, we may care to note, is the mystical view in a nutshell. The oracle speaks the ineffable: that which he does not know the cause of. Axioms are what we designate as the limits for the description of phenomena. (And in this sense, are like myths.)

## Groundlessness

> 'The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing.' (Wittgenstein, On Certainty 166)

When McCabe talks of the "Logic of Mysticism", his major topic is the use St. Thomas Aquinas has for *esse* ('to be'), which returns us to the ontological problem. 'It is a central thesis of his that we grasp the use of this word not as we grasp other meanings'. (13) Most meanings we understand 'by what he calls *simplex apprehensio*, the having of a concept of the understanding of a meaning, such as having learnt and not forgotten the meaning of, say, "fatwah"'. The difference in using a concept such as *esse* is that it does not depend (Heidegger's driving issue in BT) on our

[328] Things perceived by 'the other senses do not, by their excesses destroy the animal but only the organ . . . incidentally, for instance if an impetus or blow accompanies the sound . . . But the excess of objects of touch, whether hot, cold, hard or whatever, eliminates the animal.' (435b) Furthermore, this is a criterion for distinguishes what has and does not have a soul, since 'the tangible objects and the flavours do affect [bodies] directly; for if not, by what would these things without soul be affected and altered?' (424b)

capacity to understand the meaning of words; it is 'in our actual use of them to say what is the case that we have need of and lay hold on the *esse* of things. It is only by analogy that we can speak of the "concept" of *esse*, we do not have a concept of existence as we have a concept of greenness or prevarication or polar bears.' (McCabe 13-4) Since religious persons cannot demonstrate (the) existence (of the being of beings), 'we start not by knowing what God would be but only from features of the world we do know and which seem to be effects of God. It is our knowledge of these effects and not any knowledge of God's nature that gives us our rules for the use of the word "God".' (14) The problem is, of course, that 'God, indeed, could not have any characteristics as he does not have existence.' (26) There is thus a positive and a negative way of using words to describe 'God': the former are images (based on existents but used metaphorically to describe an absence), the latter are universals (abstractions that however literally apply to the term).

> 'St Thomas distinguishes words like "hearing", "courageous", "seeing", and "wrathful", all of which have as part of their meaning a reference to what is material (you cannot be wrathful without the bodily emotions associated with aggression; you cannot see without eyes occupying a definite position in space) from words which, although we learn how to use them in bodily experience, do not have this physical reference as part of their meaning: as "justice", for example, "love" or "goodness". The former can only be used metaphorically, to provide images of the unknown God; the latter can be used to speak of him literally though only analogically, so leaving him still utterly mysterious to us . . . It is these literal assertions that are subject to the caveat of analogy.' (McCabe 27)

The distinction between images and universals connects, I believe, to a crucial Aristotelian distinction in perception, which can involve two degrees of actualities: knowledge and contemplation.[329] The first is what constitutes the soul, the second puts this knowledge to use.[330] It also applies to an elementary logical distinction (as that between ring and 'ring'), but this time between words themselves: justice is 'justice'. The account is the thing, because the thing is an idea. In DA 417 Aristotle schematizes these two actualities in relation to their transitions from potentialities. In this order, we are firstly the kind of beings that have the potential to learn and thus, actualizing this capacity, know. At this stage, of the possession of knowledge, the soul has made its form (*entelecheia*): the word 'soul' bears its meaning because it fulfills its purpose. The second actuality ('contemplation') is that of employing knowledge. Yet 'there is a difference between them in that those things that are productive of actual perception are external, the visible and the audible and in the same way all the other sense-objects.' Contemplation, on the other hand is 'knowledge of universals, which are in a way in the soul itself. Thus it is for a man to think, whenever he will, but not so for him to perceive, because for that the presence of a sense-object is necessary.' (417b) Thus sense perception corresponds to Aquinas' images, and contemplation to universals.

This makes for the difference within iconoclasm: iconoclasts accept perception of the latter only: 'But if we say that all the words of prayers are, and have to be, a making of images (and good luck to them, so long as we can smash the images afterwards) it becomes that much more urgent to

[329] '. . . matter is potentiality, and form is actuality, and this in two ways, one that in which knowledge, the other that in which contemplation, is actuality.' (412a)

[330] '. . . it is accordingly clear that soul is actuality in the way that knowledge is. For sleeping and waking are a part of the soul's being present, and waking is like contemplation, sleeping like having but not employing knowledge.' (412a)

find another way of saying what prayer literally is. And this involves saying what God literally is.' (McCabe 57) 'God' is negatively described by metaphor, which can shift between a multitude of images, but must also be positively constrained by literal assertions. This connects to Bossuet's problem of providing what McCabe would call a 'literal critique of your metaphors' (58) that sets a limit to figurative speech within a given language used by a group of people, showing in what sense a concept is real.[331] McCabe's quest for determining what prayer and God literally are - a grammar for monotheism - resembles Aristotle's investigation of the soul in the sense that Aristotle claims that the soul grasps analogically through a literal body: but attention (what does the grasping) is incorporeal. What then is the meaning of 'soul'? The same kind of question arises regarding the 'meaning' of a poem - but in a sense, inversely. Being a concrete set of images, a poem is not a 'poem' like a 'soul' is: it is not itself an abstraction: its 'meaning' is. The 'meaning' of a poem starts from a concrete being, whereas the meaning of 'God' or 'soul' starts from an abstraction, i.e. the point of departure is already from a 'meaning'.

The caveat for making literal statements about such concepts is that we 'can use language to say what God is so long as we always realize that we do not know what our words mean.' The literal meanings of *esse* are incomprehensible because they refer to a non-entity.[332] This was the 'great Hebrew discovery: human beings are such that they worship only the mystery by which there is anything at all instead of nothing.' (56) And yet 'we mean these statements quite literally.' (57) To say that God exists is then to say that *esse* exists, it is to say that there is an ontological mystery, since 'we use the word 'God' as a label for something we do not know, for the answer to a question we can ask but cannot answer.' (55) The right meaning for 'belief in God' is thus the mystical, the pursuit of the ontological problem. The function of literal statements about God thus seems to be to maintain mystical meaning within the realm of nonsense, i.e. limiting the kind of statements we can make to the realm of questioning.[333] The meaning of 'God' is free from particulars: it is not knowledge of *what* things are, but *that* they are.[334] This is the tautological realm of universals and the mystical.[335]

But we must return to DA and perception. Both actualities 'reside in' the soul - 'the soul is the place of forms.' (429a). Forms are grasped from the world as sense impressions: once 'inside' – i.e., once beings have been *grasped* as knowledge - they can be thought.[336] Since knowledge (forms) is having an account of beings, then the exercise of knowledge (the role of the intellect, *nous*) requires a perception of these accounts. The logic of attention to the self is that *nous* looks onto, or listens to, *logos*. Contemplation is therefore the self-reflexive thinking that is the thinking of

[331] 'Nearly all of our language about God is metaphorical . . . If it is all metaphorical you do not realize that it *is* metaphorical and you are back enslaved to the gods . . . You need a literal critique of your metaphors, you need to be able to say God is not a god'. (McCabe 58)

[332] As Weil has said of the supernatural good, 'We can say that God is love, so long as we recognize that this love is incomprehensible.' (McCabe 57)

[333] 'Douglas Adams's novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* suggests that the answer is 42, and I take it that the point of this is that there is no answer. Ask a silly question and you deserve a silly answer. But it is *not* a silly question so there *is* an answer, although certainly any answer of ours you might give would be a silly answer . . . To say it is not a silly question but a real one is to say there is an answer although we do not know what it is. This is to say God exists.' (55-6)

[334] This is another key distinction Socrates plays with in the *Charmides* which I do not have space to go into here.

[335] '. . . as Epictetus repeatedly insists throughout his *Discourses*, real goods actually cannot conflict: the world and human life are so constructed that true goods form a single, coherent, mutually realizable structure.' (Strange 46)

[336] 'There is thus an analogy between the soul and the hand – the hand is a tool of tools, the intellect a form of forms and the sense a form of sense-objects.' (DA 432a)

thinking. It is in this sense that one is to understand 'theory'.[337] For Aristotle (and Heidegger), truth is already a matter of perception, of some kind of agreement between sense perception and contemplation.[338]

It follows from DA that before being grasped, the world is not a known thing but has the potential to be known. This alone dilutes the realist/idealist debate because it says at once that the world precedes our perception of it, yet is only 'made' through our experiences in it. Prior to our (continuous) experience in it, the world is a mere unidentified substance, an objective yet meaningless presence. Aristotle notes 'that the sound contained in a quarter-note escapes notice, and yet one hears the whole strain, inasmuch as it is a continuum; but the interval between the extreme sounds [that bound the quarter-tone] escapes the ear [being only potentially audible, not actually].' (PN 446a) To make sense of reality we have to divide it into scales or species (depending, respectively, on whether the thing is continuous or not).[339] Everything is potentially perceived; but we only grasp (understand, recognize) what is actualized in the sense of gaining a form (an account).[340] That the soul simply has form is not enough – something must 'see' what is seen. This is where attention has to come in, as a meta-sense; but in Aristotle the possibility of an infinite regress is cut short, as Burnyeat notes, precisely because attention is stipulated as the ground of our being. It is, moreover, an incorporeal ground, for 'that which perceives [the senses] would be some thing extended, but what it is to be perceptive will certainly not be extended nor the sense; rather, they will be a formula [*logos*] and capacity of what perceives.' (424a, my italics) The fact that we perceive stems back to our natural faculty of *logos*. *Nous* and *logos* constantly relapse and collapse into each other. This is symptomatic, that these terms only signify within this relation.

## Immortality

The fact that attention (here in the general sense of awareness, the perception of perception) is an incorporeal sense is what enabled the Neo-Platonist Christians, and later Descartes, to separate the soul from the body.[341] Christianity moved the source of thought from the self – more precisely from *logos* - to God. So the content of 'contemplation' shifts: from *logos* (self-reflexive reasoning) to the contemplation of the divine, of God.[342] There is thus a transition

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[337] 'Philosophy itself is defined as *episteme tis tes aletheias*, the science of "truth." But at the same time it is characterized as an *episteme, e theorein to on e on,* as the science that considers [*theorein*, contemplates] beings as beings, that is, with regard to their being [*Sein*].' (H213)

[338] 'Is "truth" made thematic in this inquiry in the sense of a theory of knowledge or of judgment? Obviously not, for "truth" means the same thing as the "matter", "what shows itself."' (H213)

[339] '. . . that which is continuous is divisible into an infinite number of unequal parts, but into a finite number of equal parts, while that which is not per se continuous is divisible into species which are finite in number . . . the several sensible qualities of things [i.e. colors, savors, etc.] are to be reckoned as species, while continuity always subsists in these'. (PN 445b)

[340] Only an analytical attention to particulars can break up a mix to focus on parts, since 'extremely small constituents are unnoticed because they are only potentially not actually visible, unless they have been parted from the wholes.' (PN 446a)

[341] 'It is in this way that the notion of the soul attacked by Aristotle is the historical ancestor of Descartes's notion of the mind: a Platonist notion of the soul freed of the role to have to animate a body.' (Frede 97)

[342] In Matt. 26:41, Jesus tells Peter and two sons of Zebedee: 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Goodwin stresses how 'Jesus uses the word *watch* – as if prayer, or meditation, were a state of consciousness, a form of seeing.' This state of watching 'is close to contemplation, which Christians later use to describe advanced prayer . . . Jesus . . . probably knew the Greek view of *theoria* not as intellect or thought's activity, as in our

toward an objective personification of *logos* in the sense that the content is moved 'outside' the subject and, moreover, mythologically described as a person. This shift was largely supported on an interpretation of Aristotle's introduction, in III.5, of the controversial 'active intellect' (*nous poietikos*).[343] Aristotle thus creates a distinction within *nous* itself, contrasting the passive to the active intellect, respectively *nous* pathetikos and *nous poietikos*.[344] The latter intellect, being described as 'immortal and eternal' (430a), has led commentators throughout the centuries to read III.5 as providing theological support for the afterlife of the soul.[345] Again, this is a problem of literal reading – what distinguishes poor, orthodox, fanciful reading from the allegorical reading required by the mystical realist.[346]

When Aristotle justifies how contemplation is our life's goal (*telos*) at the end of NE, and how we must strive for a live of virtue, he does so in terms of immortality. We 'must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us'. (NE 1177b) He cannot by necessity mean this literally, for there are no degrees in literal immortality; it makes no sense to ask to strive to be a bit immortal ('as far as we can'). Moreover, immortality, Aristotle had argued before, relates to the desiderative element of wish, not of choice, 'for choice cannot relate to impossibles, and if any one said he chose [acts done in the spur of the moment] he would be thought silly; but there may be a wish even for impossibles, e.g. for immortality.' (NE 1112a) Unreflective acts are not the result of choice, for no one who is virtuous would choose to act that way.[347] It is virtue in exemplary men that becomes immortal in our memory of them, and they as models for moral education.[348] In addition, I take the 'make

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current sense of reason, but as the contemplation of activity in the intellect or mind that comes from seeing (*theorein*) the divine idea.' (65)

[343] 'When Theophrastus speaks of it, he leaves no doubt that he takes the *nous poiëtikos* to be something belonging to the human nature. The *Ethics* of Eudemus, on the other hand, has been cited in support of the opposite opinion: this philosopher, who is said to have followed his teacher's path most faithfully, seems to identify the active intellect with God. If this were true, then Aristotle's greatest disciples, who received the doctrine directly from the master, would have been divided on the very issue which to this day accounts for the deepest division between interpretations.' (Brentano 313) Wilkes confesses he 'cannot understand this chapter, and none of the secondary literature has so far helped me to do so' because here 'we find the apparent survival of the "active intellect"', in what appears to be the attempt to 'draw some line somewhere between what rots in the earth after death, and what somehow survives.' (126)

[344] 'And indeed there is an intellect characterized by the capacity to become all things, and an intellect characterized by that to bring all things about' (430a)

[345] For example, 'Avicenna teaches that of the two intellects that Aristotle distinguishes in DA 3. 5 . . . highest part of the soul is spiritual and not mixed with the body. Therefore it does not perish even when the body dies' (Brentano 315) Yet the view is general inasmuch as it is an interpretation aimed to justify a way of life: 'In his earliest draft, Burnyeat called his view "the Christian view". Finding it in John Philoponus, St Thomas Aquinas, and Franz Brentano, he mentions as significant the fact that all there were 'committed Christians'. We agree with him that this fact is significant. For all three were not simply interpreters of the text of Aristotle; nor were they simply seekers after the best explanation of the functioning of living beings as we encounter them in this world. They were engaged in the delicate enterprise of Aristotelian theodicy—the attempt to use Aristotle's excellence and authority to bolster and flesh out a picture of the world that would be an acceptable foundation for Christian life and discourse. Such a thinker must give some story about the immortal life of the separated soul; this story will have to ascribe to it a cognitive functioning rich enough to support Christian hopes and beliefs concerning the life after death.' (Nussbaum e Putnam, Changing Aristotle's Mind 55)

[346] 'Belief in immortality is harmful, for it is not our power to conceive of the soul as really incorporeal ... it robs death of its purpose.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 37)

[347] Choice 'is thought to be most closely bound up with virtue, and to discriminate characters better than actions do . . . Again, the incontinent man acts with appetite, but not with choice.' (111b) This point would lead us to a refutation of Nussbaum's argument for anger and against the Stoics in reference to Medea's "love" (forthcoming).

[348] 'Socrates: He didn't care; it was not his skin he wanted to save, but the man of honour and integrity. These things are not open to compromise or negotiation. . . . In his own words, he didn't want to save the body, he wanted to preserve the element that grows and thrives with every act of justice, the element that is diminished and dies by injustice.' (Epictetus 4,1,161;163)

ourselves immortal' above to be significantly related to *poietikos*.[349] In NE we find the ethical counterpart of the soul-making that in DA Aristotle investigates starting from sense perception. Whereas DA is his study of attention to innerworldly beings in general, NE is the more specific study of attention to others. What both have in common, we must begin to unveil, is the specificity of attention Weil calls creative attention. Let us quickly revisit the implications of moral attention discussed in NE, before proceeding with DA.

In our discussion of redemption in Ch.1, there were two kinds of person at stake: Roquentin desired to imitate beauty in a work of art, Weil to imitate Christ. As we saw in Ch.2, in NE Aristotle distinguished between clever people and good people. These, in turn, relate to two types of attention: aesthetic and moral; or in other words, attention to things vs. people. Roquentin's redemption hinges on what he may be able to achieve through his book ('perhaps, because of it, I could remember my life without repugnance . . . And I might succeed —in the past, nothing but the past—in accepting myself.') He seems to view his book as a medal that may award him admiration and immortality ('there would be people who would read this book and say: "Antoine Roquentin wrote it'"). His redemption would be attained by perfecting his artistic merits; he would desire, as W. H. Auden says "In Memory of W. B. Yeats",[iv] that 'By mourning tongues / The death of the poet was kept from his poems.' But there is no hint of a desire to be good, to change his personality or attitude toward people. The book ends very casually, as if nothing had happened; or perhaps as if reality simply clicked back into place, without mythologies.[350] Auden also says that 'poetry makes nothing happen: it survives . . . A way of happening, a mouth.' With poetry nothing changes in the world, only in descriptions of it. Inversely, because her attention is extended to others, Weil sees no difference between bringing life or soul (*anima*) to a book or to a person. Where Roquentin writes 'I', Weil gives it away, to create or concede reality to another being.

> '. . . true creation means self-loss. We do not perceive this truth, because fame confuses and covers with its glory achievements of the highest order . . . Love for our neighbor, being made of creative attention, is analogous to genius. Creative attention means really giving our attention to what does not exist. Humanity does not exist in the anonymous flesh lying inert by the roadside. The Samaritan who stops and looks gives his attention all the same to this absent humanity, and the actions which follow prove that it is a question of real attention.' (Weil 92)

In her attack against universals, Nussbaum claims that a distinction to be made within abstract thought is that 'whereas the mathematician can safely disregard the concrete features of his or her imagined triangle when she is proving a theorem about triangles, the person of practical wisdom will not neglect the concrete deliverances of imagination when thinking about virtue and goodness.' (77-8) The difference, she adds, is that 'Instead of ascending from particular to general,

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Also, 'Even now, long after Socrates' death, the memory of what he did and said benefits humanity as much as or more than ever.' (Epictetus 4,169) For Christianity of course, Jesus is the eternal model example of humility.

[349] I have already indicated the manner in which I share Wilke's intuition that *nous poietikos* is related to NE, where 'we discover that man can, to some extent, aspire to godhood, inasmuch as he is capable of contemplation (*theoria*).' (127)

[350] 'Night falls. On the second floor of the Hotel Printania two windows have just lighted up. The building-yard of the New Station smells strongly of damp wood: tomorrow it will rain in Bouville.' (116)

deliberative imagination links particulars without dispensing with their particularity.' (78) The arguable difference Nussbaum seems to be wagering on is that we are more emotionally tied to people than to triangles. Nussbaum is quite right in saying that 'The agent who discerns intellectually that a friend is in need or that a loved one has died, but who fails to respond to these facts with appropriate sympathy or grief, clearly lacks a part of Aristotelian virtue.' (79) The agent's heart is not in it. Nussbaum's project largely revolves around saving the passions from irrationality, which requires a defense of the rationality of emotions and the imagination.[351] Nussbaum centers this defense on Aristotle, given that 'the Aristotelian position does not simply inform us that theorizing needs to be completed with intuitive and emotional responses; it warns us of the ways in which theorizing can impede vision. The intellect is not only not all-sufficient, it is a dangerous master.' (81) Nussbaum is of course right in saying this; it is true that we may be blinded to present attentiveness by theoretical preconceptions – but it is also true, as the Stoics say, and so will Aristotle himself tell us, that the emotions offer exactly the same danger.[352] This opposition is not the central issue.

In arguing against the conceptual abstraction of triangles, Nussbaum is taking for granted that when we think of goodness and virtue we do not do so through abstract thought but only via the perception of particulars, i.e. of particular people. Yet it is not a universal law that we have love for others; this depends foremost on how we regard particular people (or humanity in general): as human beings or as animals, souls or things, people or mere objective presences. More than we would like to acknowledge (and as the parable of the Samaritan exemplifies), we only recognize a few people as fully human.[353] Love is an intersubjective notion - it cannot live without the attention we grant those we love, but we seldom do this, and, most significantly, the vast majority of us are not open to giving loving attention to everyone. It follows that unless our capacity for loving is framed within a universal conception (i.e. a sort of love that can be shared with everyone alike, the characteristic we recognize in the saint and sophron alike), there is absolutely no logical necessity for our attention to particulars to be attentive in this (loving) manner. In other words, the criterion for the wrong way of generalizing virtue is not whether we think of triangles or virtue, but how we use our attention; in this particular case, our attention to others.

Evil depends especially on this distinction: our abstraction (to the point of deletion) of souls from bodies: a negation of others' humanity. This negation is essentially a denial of our attention to others, a refusal to acknowledge and read souls.[354] If our attention has the capacity to reject others' humanity, then it means that this rejection – more than the fact that we are thinking of theories, this lack of attention – is the wedge in the distinction between bodies and souls. From

[351] Nussbaum directly links emotion and imagination, in opposition to the detachment of reason. 'It frequently happens that theoretical people, proud of their intellectual abilities and confident in their possession of techniques for the solution of practical problems, are led by their theoretical commitments to become inattentive to the concrete responses of *emotion and imagination* that would be essential constituents of correct perception.' (81, my italics)

[352] 'The soul is a sphere which retains the integrity of its own form if it does not bulge or contract for anything, does not flare or subside, but keeps the constant light by which it sees the truth of all things and the truth in itself.' (Marcus Aurelius 11,12)

[353] 'Among human beings, only the existence of those we love is fully recognized.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 64)

[354] 'Belief in the existence of other human beings as such is *love*.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 64) Also, 'We read, but also *we are read by*, others. Interferences in these readings. Forcing someone to read himself as we read him (slavery). Forcing others to read us as we read ourselves (conquest). A mechanical process. More often than not a dialogue between deaf people.' (Weil, Gravity and Grace 135)

this point of view, the soul or mind-body dichotomy is essentially a means of talking about attention.

> 'Myth is not fiction; it consists of facts that are continually repeated and observed . . . the fact that the life of Christ is largely myth does absolutely nothing to disprove its factual worth - quite the contrary . . . the mythical character of a life is just what expresses its universal human validity . . . the life of Christ is just what it had to be if it is the life of a god and a man at the same time. It is a *symbolum*, a bringing together of heterogeneous natures, rather as if Job and Jahweh were combined into a single personality.' (Murdoch 134)

It is in this sense that immortality pertains to virtue, to ethical value (towards others). The fact that an ethical tradition must support a moral education means that such men or myths must be *remembered* for their value. This is one of the simplest reasons for why we write: to remember things, and by extension to make ideas survive time. Thus man and myth are symbolically united. Roquentin's criterion of hardness relates, in Stevens' poem, both to the hammer that makes and the steel that is made. That his story be, like the tune, as 'hard as steel' and remain 'the same, young and firm' is, from the point of view of a crafted thing, a property of inscription. Words, i.e. written *things that as ideas can remain alive after us* also convey an idea of transcendence, which is what leads Roquentin to say that 'the melody is absolutely untouched by this tiny coughing of the needle on the record.' (114) We can read the character of universality in poems because, as I mentioned, when they participate in *metanoia* (when we pay attention to and if are changed by the words), they show forth the logical form of tautology: the words always remain the same; and yet we interpret the same poem differently on different occasions. That is, just as in tautological statements different propositions can be replaced for others 'meaning' the same thing, the poem, in its fixed, 'hard' form is open to different interpretations (propositional justifications referring to the same words) - and yet a 'final meaning' that would break the circle is never supplied. Here there is a different contrastive effect: as Auden says of Yeats, 'Where you yourself were not quite yourself'.

## The 6th Sense

Returning to DA, although Aristotle maintains that beings are a whole,[355] the way in which parts might be said to relate and remain distinct as accounts of their different functions finds a simile: 'Not that there are not some parts that nothing prevents from being separable, through their not being the actuality of any body. But it remains unclear whether the soul is the actuality of a body in this way' – i.e. separate – 'or rather is as the sailor of a boat.' (413a) Under this simile, the soul maintains its quality of separateness yet is incorporated, becoming the spearhead. In Stoicism, this idea of holistic control would not merely be expressed in an insistence on the power of the will over the self (in whatever aspects it might have had that led to its Roman caricature, and would later become concrete in Kantian duty); it will mostly find continuity with Aristotle by relating attention as a form of logical interpretation of impressions through Marcus Aurelius' concept of

[355] '. . . the soul and body *are* the animal.' (DA 413a)

the directing mind.[356] The capacity to judge impressions, however, as I have suggested in the first chapters, is only the prior means that creates a desiderative ground to motivate the self to act in a certain way, placing the act itself above any consideration of the 'I' or effects to the body.[357] In ethics, it is a precondition that, figuratively speaking, thinking is separate from the body: action itself is 'selfless': that is, invariably, the influence of ideals (universals) such as humility or duty on action. In sum, Aristotle's *entelecheia* in DA has to be equated with the moral *entelecheia* envisioned in NE. This is partly the role of *nous poietikos*, which is defined by the stipulation that 'in all cases that which acts is superior to that which is affected, and the principle to its matter.' (430a)

But we must take a step back to the point where Aristotle begins his discussion of the intellect in III.4, to then see how in the 'obscure' III.5 he is still relating a particular sort of knowledge (abstract thought) with a particular sort of attention (contemplation). Thinking is like perceiving, Aristotle says, in that it is 'some kind of affection by the thought-object'. (429a) It is unlike perception, however, in that it is 'something unaffected which yet receives the form and is potentially of the same kind as its object but not the same particular'. (429a) This unaffectedness is *ataraxia*, here in its pre-ethical, perceptive aspect. Separateness is a logical condition of analogy because forms are like things in kind. Aristotle contrasts the fact that sense perception is affected by excess ('a sense loses the power to perceive after something excessively perceptible') with 'when the intellect has thought something extremely thinkable, it thinks lesser objects more not less' (429b), meaning that the comprehension of a more abstract idea will shed light on a series of class-related particulars. Abstract concepts enable us to classify groups of things, and carry out series, such as in multiplication or prime numbers. We see ideas through language. Let us rest here for a while.

In "Eyesight" - A.R. Ammons talks of attention as the source of sight.

> It was May before my
> attention came
> to spring and
> my word I said
> to the southern slopes
> I've
> missed it, it
> came and went before
> I got right to see:
> don't worry, said the mountain,
> try the later northern slopes
> or if
> you can climb, climb
> into spring: but

[356]'Mere things stand isolated outside our doors, with no knowledge or report of themselves. What then reports on them? Our directing mind.' (Marcus Aurelius 9,15)

[357] 'Remember that what pulls the strings is that part of us hidden inside: that is the power to act, that is the principle of life, that, one could say, is the man himself. So never give any equal thought to the vessel that contains it or the organs built round it . . . There is no more use in these parts without the agency which starts or stops them than in the shuttle without the weaver, the pen without the writer'. (Marcus Aurelius 10,38)

said the mountain
it's not that way
with all things, some
that go are gone

A quick reading of the poem tells us that on a mountain, the poet discovers he has missed spring because he was not ready to see it. The mountain tells him there may still be hope if he tries the other face of the mountain or to climb all the way to the summit. Notwithstanding, although you may attempt different ways of finding things, sometimes there is nothing one can do. Some things leave, some things die. The fragmented style in which these verses are written makes us go back through the words again, repeatedly, and what is more important, slowly. This difference toward time changes our habitual mode of attention. The words do not rhyme nor is there any meter; and yet this absence of musical elements means that the only thing that can seize our attention is the thoughtful way in which each verse and each word is put to use. Stripped of all else (like the Wheelbarrow) this act of abstraction from other typical poetical resources focuses our reading even more on the possibilities of meaning. But as we reread, words become ambiguous and their meaning seem to start to act like music in the imagination: possibilities are added to each word; such as 'May' offering itself as a capitalized modal verb itself suggests (a World of Possibilities that May come into being). These plural meanings, however, require a holistic constraint not to run the risk of becoming complete nonsense. There must be space for depth of meaning, yet the poem as a whole must still have a general purpose (an aboutness) to have cohesion. This is the balance Ammons has struck in his ideas.

Read again, 'spring' may also be a verb, and this failure for it to leap, to make its appearance, is coupled ('and') with 'my word' – so that 'my word I said' becomes an idiom that now refers to the elements of his own failure: he was too late in springing his attention and his word. So to the southern slopes he has said 'my word I said' and 'my word'. And yet this playfulness does not say anything contradictory, but the same thing in another way. This helps create a mood – one that somehow pulls the poem forward. This may sound awkward, but the minimal 'I've' concentrates, in my mind, all past experience as flowing into the present, looking out in expectation into the blank future: Heidegger's temporality in a nutshell.[358] The (contracted) words trigger this because they reach out from, and back into, my experience of life itself.[359] (And yet I had read this same contraction many times over, without ever stopping to notice it quite in this manner, until abstracted from an articulated context.) The doubled 'it' that follows also gains a strange significance, as an absence is called into presence by this impersonal pronoun. Poetic language, common opinion says, makes words come alive; they become *anima*-ted, they gain a soul, ours.

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[358] 'Temporality makes possible the unity of existence, facticity, and falling prey and thus constitutes primordially the wholeness of the structure of care. The factors of care are not pieced together cumulatively, any more than temporality itself has first been put together out of future, past, and present "in the course of time." . . . Future, having-been, and present show the phenomenal characteristics of "toward itself," "back to," letting something be encountered.' (H 328)

[359] "'Fare well!" "A whole world of pain lies in these words" How can it live in them? – It is bound up with them. The words are like the acorn from which an *oak tree* can grow. But where is it laid down, according to which the tree grows out of the acorn? Well, the picture is incorporated into our thinking as a result of experience.' (CV 60e)

That 'it' 'came and went before' now sounds like 'it' has been here before, possibly many times, it may-be always. But these parallel thoughts are still kept on track – for our first reading had encountered a quaint narrative. So my attention came and went (was distracted and unmastered) before 'I got right to see:'. The colon seems to say, "and this is how it is, to see rightly:" 'don't worry' – this is the secret of the mountain, who has been here 'before', a word now repeated twice, because 'It was May before my / attention came' (and so it has been May many times before). This intimates ancient knowledge. Don't worry: "*Ataraxia*." You may still get right to see: "*Sophrosyne*." Don't worry, "there will other slopes, later, but these you will have to climb and climb" ('if' you can). The lingering element of time ('later' is at first only visible as a spatial expectation in the sense of "farther away" due to the southern/northern opposition) evokes the theme of experience. (And so rereading – time – shows forth.) Perhaps you will be ready later, the mountain seems to say.[360] That poems are fixed linguistic structures, like sculptures of words, promotes our return to them, gives us the chance to think about them under a different light, which is the fruit of our evolving experience, and obtain a different reflection. In this sense, reading is self-reflection: the mountain that speaks to our attention, our eyesight, is our experience. We may make the effort of climbing, the effort of training our attention and of pursuing lines of thought. But, said the mountain, not all things call upon the same path. Climbing into spring is a teleological belief, an expectation that through discipline, through morality, rewards may come. Thus 'that way' refers to direction (toward the spring) as well as method (how). If we think of dualities, then the going to the spring may involve climbing or just going, or just staying where you are. But if we think within time, then it may involve all three, at different times. And so opposing 'all' and 'some', Ammons also opposes universals and particulars: No matter how much we may learn to control our attention, 'some' things (including I) will die. The only things that do not are the 'all things' of universals, that is, written words. This difference between permanence and the passing of spring water, marks two different positions regarding language.

> 'Here is the difference betwixt the poet and the mystic, that the last nails a symbol to one sense, which was a true sense for a moment, but soon becomes old and false . . . Mysticism consists in the mistake of an accidental and individual symbol for a universal one. The morning-redness happens to be the favorite meteor to the eyes of Jacob Behmen, and comes to stand to him for truth and faith; and he believes should stand for the same realities to every reader. But the first reader prefers as naturally the symbol of a mother and child, or a gardener and his bulb, or a jeweller polishing a gem. Either of these, or of a myriad more, are equally good to the person to whom they are significant. . . . all religious error consisted in making the symbol too stark and solid, and, at last, nothing but an excess of the organ of language.' (Emerson, "The Poet")

Emerson sees the use of the symbol as an expression of the same impulse – it is the will to delimit it to a narrow vocabulary that he accuses the believer of. The moralist holds on to a few symbols as the sacred ones, containing chance itself, which the poet embraces. The consequence is that the moralist does not know how to *gracefully* improvise, for he does not allow himself to read new words from the world but instead reads the world from a Book. This kills reading at the spring. For attention to catch spring, the creative season when I make *my* word, my attention must be ready to spring, i.e. to play.

[360] 'This is how philosophers should salute each other: "Take your time."' (Wittgenstein CV 91e)

Ammons recurrently makes attention his poetic subject. This sense of springing evokes another poem of Ammons where attention is a "Pet Panther".[v] It begins: 'My attention is a wild / animal: it will if idle /make trouble where there / was no harm . . .' Poetry is the play that helps soothe this 'fierce animal', providing a healthy distraction: for it will lest 'undistracted by/ verbal toys, pommel the / heart frantic' Poetry stops this wild reactivity of the poet from pouncing on everything: in a sense this effort to hold still, to stop reactivity short, of itself organizes the mind: attention makes us think more clearly. By calling his poem on attention "Eyesight", Ammons seems to make an Aristotelian statement by making use of a composite word that applies to the normal, functioning use of our faculty of sight through its particular organ.[361] In so doing, he claims that our intrinsic end is to grow into attention. We are that kind of being. So let us return to Aristotle's account of the kind of being we are.

## The light of *nous poietikos*

Aristotle's definition of *nous poietikos* is that it has the capacity to 'bring all things about . . . in just the way that a state, like light does. (For in a way, light also makes things that are potentially colours colours in actuality.) Now this latter intellect is separate, unaffected and unmixed, being in substance activity.' (430a) Leading up to III.5, Aristotle raises the problem of how the intellect, a passive affection of forms, can think if, 'as Anaxagoras says,' it 'is simple and unaffected and has nothing in common with anything'. (429b) Wilkes says that, following the image of light, 'presumably the passive intellect can no more think without the active intellect than the eye can see colours without light. But this makes it hard to consider the active intellect as being itself a form of thought; rather, it seems to be what makes thinking possible.' (126) I believe this is half right. Light makes thinking possible, but before that we methodically make light possible, and this is thinking too. St. John's dark night was the preparation of the soul for light. The way light works in St. John's model actually bears strong similarities with Aristotle's.

> 'We observe that a ray of sunlight which enters through the window is the less clearly visible according as it is the purer and freer from specks, and the more of such specks and motes there are in the air, the brighter is the light to the eye. The reason is that it is not the light itself that is seen; the light is but the means whereby the other things that it strikes are seen, and then it is also seen itself, through its reflection in them; were it not for this, neither it nor they would have been seen.' (John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul 2,8,3)

For St. John the 'first and principal benefit caused by this arid and dark night of contemplation [is] the knowledge of oneself and of one's misery.' (1,12,2) What comes to light are our imperfections, as seen objectively.[362] From this perspective, things already are in a certain way, but we just do not see them. St. John's is a particular kind of attention: to the self; the specks are

[361] 'For if the eye was an animal, then sight would be its soul, being the substance of the eye that is in accordance with the account of it. And the eye is the matter of sight, so that when sight leaves it it is no longer an eye except homonymously, in the way of a stone or painted eye.' (412b)

[362] 'The darkness and the other evils of which the soul is conscious when this Divine light strikes it are not darkness or evils caused by this light, but pertain to the soul itself, and the light illumines it so that it may see them.' (John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul 2,13,10)

what goes on in our soul, but we must determine what such impressions mean: some might be good and some bad.[363] Note that meaning, however - in this case – signifies intentions. Yet what is 'made' in Aristotle's intellect is not like intentions, feelings, moods, emotions but like colors. Aristotle's attention is to beings. Notwithstanding, light is the essential factor in both models, the ideal which permits the contrast, 'objective' because light is transparent.

Recourse to the metaphor of light might appear less fantastic if we remember that Aristotle's account of (both moral and aesthetic) perception revolves around the analogic reception of forms, made in contrast to a mean.[364] To judge properly, the soul must be knowledgeable of both opposites the mean is the mean of.[365] Whatever it is we (think we) know, it is through this process. Aristotle's perception, which relies on an ability to discern when things are 'off key', in fact imports an important Platonic model: *ametria*, the idea of the sick soul as that which is out of balance, disharmonized.[366] This of course presupposes that there is, at least, an ideal base of balance and harmony. As we can see, the same model essentially continues in III.5, but now the context is 'understanding', i.e. reception.

This brings us back to *ataraxia*, for the model will only operate if the mean is not disturbed by excesses of the senses.[367] As we will pursue soon, whereas the moral equivalent to perceptive excess is *pathos*, the cognitive equivalent is *phantasia*. But for now, my point is that light's effect on color is set up as an explicative allegory to show that there are necessary conditions for perception to function well.[368] Grammatically, light is the external criterion that tells us whether the perceptive state, whose spatial metaphors are the 'mean' or 'medium' (and of which *logos* is the formula, the concord, the sense of balance), is working well. In other words, if the conditions of possibility of perception itself are properly instated: that the soul is in balance.[369] So this healthiness (*sophrosyne*) is a prior condition; and if the soul does not interfere, then light will do the seeing for the eye.[370]

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[363] According to Heidegger, this must go on naturally (a characteristic of Dasein), for if we do not listen to what is seen in the contrast, the hearing can become the *voice* of guilt Heidegger says is conscience, which calls. (Then there is moral pressure for *metanoia*.)

[364] 'For perception is being affected in a certain way. Thus the active thing makes that which is potentially like it like it in actuality. And it is for this reason that we do not perceive what is equally hot or cold or rough or smooth, but rather the excessive degrees, sensation being as it were a kind of mean of the opposition in the sense-objects, and thus a judge of them.' (424a)

[365] 'For it is the mean that judges, being the opposite to each of the two ends of the scale, and, just like that which is to perceive white and black, it must be neither in actuality but both in potentiality, and so with the other senses'. (424a)

[366] 'Now this is what Plato does with moral impurity or "disease of the soul." The latter ceases to be a stain or filth, subject to being "washed away" by the material means of religious or juridical *katharsis* and is converted into *ametria* of the soul, into imbalance or disorder of the beliefs, knowledge, feelings, and appetites that give the *psyche* its content and structure. As "psychological states" of a concrete man, injustice and wickedness are but morbid alterations of the good internal order of the soul, "discord" (*stasis*) of the elements that make it up. An unjust man must be basically nothing else than a man psychically out of tune.' (Laín 132)

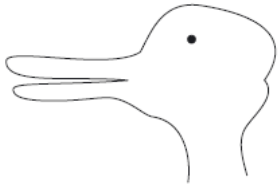
[367] For 'if the concord is a formula, it is necessary that hearing too be a kind of formula. This is also why hearing is destroyed by each excess . . . in the same way that taste is destroyed by excesses of flavouring . . . For there is a kind of ratio of sensation . . . So sensation is a formula, dissolved or destroyed by excesses.' (426a-b)

[368] '. . . the colour by its own nature produces a certain effect on the medium (air or water), provided this medium is actually transparent.' (Burnyeat, Additional Essay: How much happens when Aristotle sees red and hears middle C? 411)

[369] 'The actuality of the transparent, we discover a bit later at 418b9, is light. Light is not fire, nor is it any kind of body or emanation from bodies (418b14-15); that is to say, it is not anything that moves (Empedocles is criticized for saying that light travels—418b20 ff.). And it is not a movement either (*Sens.* 6, 446b30-1). Rather, light is a state or disposition (*hexis*, 418b19; 3. 5, 430a15), the transparency of the medium, its being actually transparent.' (411)

[370] 'Thus the condition laid down for a colour to produce its effect on a medium is not an event or process, but a static condition, a state of affairs. And the condition for this condition is static too . . . It is not necessary for the fire to *do* anything. It just has to be there and the transparent nature of the medium realizes itself.' (411)

Burnyeat describes this state of affairs, yet finds it implausible – because this description does not explain anything, it just describes a state of affairs.[371] Burnyeat, however, as we have seen, does not believe it makes sense *from within* the expectation of an explanation. 'For Aristotle, reference to the faculty or power of hearing is a paradigm of satisfactory explanation. Indeed, it is a terminus of explanation, and a very good place for me to stop.' (411) I am trying to establish that, since *logos* is the very formula whereby we discern whether there is a prior perceptive balance then, because *logos* also means language, Aristotle's allegory implicitly says that 'light' (understanding, *nous*) makes 'color' (the word) *make* a color. Light lets us 'see' what we see, and thus see what we 'see'.



When Wittgenstein contrasts two senses of 'see' in (PI II,xi,118), he is essentially intrigued with a concept's 'lighting-up'. 'See' usually refers to either a sense perception (literal) or an understanding (metaphoric sense) of a being or form. But it can also refer to a new understanding, as established relationally, by comparison.[372] (This is Aristotle's second actuality, of active thought.) I believe that in this section, Wittgenstein is (among other problems) essentially interested in the fact that understanding comes naturally, on its own, as a surprise or miracle.[373] (It is the result of waiting.) Wittgenstein relates 'lighting up' with the *appearance* of a seeing-as: 'I observe a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience "noticing an aspect".' (II,xi,113) In poetry, the way meanings shift in time - the ambiguous nature of poetry – functions within this scenario. Ambiguity (the form can either be a duck or a rabbit) is the common element. The 'effort' of thinking does not consist in frowning but in securing one's attention, which means continuing to look thoughtfully at, be troubled by, the problem or ambiguity. And then when 'I see what you mean', my understanding has 'lit up': there is a moment of seeing-as-understanding ('seeing'). Once the problem has

[371] 'If you find this incredible, I can only say that I do too, but it is what the texts contain. The great commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias puts light in the category of *relation* (*in Sens*. 134. 11-19; cf. 132. 2-16). When the sun rises or a lamp is lit, for the air around us this is a mere change of relation. The statement 'When fire comes to be present in the air, the air is illuminated' is just like the statement 'When I move to the left of my desk, the desk comes to be on my right'. As usual, Alexander understands Aristotle very well.' (411)

[372] 'Two uses of the word "see". The one: "What do you see there?" - "I see this" (and then a description, a drawing, a copy). The other: "I see a likeness in these two faces" What is important is the categorical difference between the two 'objects' of sight.' (PI II,xi,111)

[373] I agree with Schroeder on this particular point. 'Mulhall's claim is that in spite of the fact that most of the time Wittgenstein appears to discuss cases of aspect change, the concept of continuous aspect perception—and the general attitude it characterizes—is his real concern. The same view was expressed some twenty years earlier by P. F. Strawson . . . However, there is a considerable number of passages in Wittgenstein that appear to contradict Mulhall's interpretation (and Strawson's claim). Not that Wittgenstein would have denied the ubiquity of aspect perception as a continuous, dispositional attitude; it is only that there are many parts of the discussion where that is clearly not his main interest.' (Schroeder 354; 356) Namely that 'I must distinguish between the "continuous seeing" of an aspect and an aspect's "lighting up". The picture might have been shown me, without my ever seeing in it anything but a rabbit.' (PI II,xi,118)

dissolved, the knot has been untied, we can thenceforth recognize the concept (read a new meaning) in the thing. Now 'seeing' is both understanding and actually seeing the concept there in the picture. After both aspects have "lit up" – we would not say that we *interpret* it but only that it can now be *seen* in more than one way. For once we have seen the two aspects we are no longer missing a 'meaning' or a logical relation to a form. We have then learned a new way of using the image and the novelty ceases, until further noticing.[374]

Although this is something we naturally do (a faculty), particular cases only work within a given, learned language: I cannot 'see' a 'rabbit' in the picture unless I know what a rabbit is; and less than this meaning that I must have already seen one, it above all requires my knowledge of how to use pictures, which is a skill all on its own. Like having learned to walk as an infant, these acquisitions took a long time – we just do not remember the effort. If I had never seen a picture before, I would not understand what *that* was (as when primitives are first shown photographs). This has nothing to do with stupidity or a failure to understand the world 'scientifically' – but is simply ignorance of specific representational techniques.[375] I am certain that if and when I visit China I will be the proper fool. Something similar happens with Aristotle's example of colors. What I am interested in is why Aristotle chose 'color' for his illustration of *nous poietikos*. The point is that the 'way of happening' in which light turns potential colors into actual colors relates, in a 'lit-up' moment of signification, particulars and universals, beings and meanings, because formulated in *logos*. This seeming instantaneousness (that lights up) is why Aristotle chooses light as a metaphor.[376] (And it is of course why Stevens chose light as a metaphor for metaphor.) It is because for Aristotle light reveals changes in beings themselves and does not denote a change in - does not affect - the medium, that light indicates qualitative change.[377] Light is an effective cause of seeing because it lights up *the relation between* what is seen and what sees, unifying the mediating space into a whole and bridging the distance in a single instant.[378] Light allows for (and participates in) intersubjectivity.

At this point I would like to pause to evoke Williams' wheelbarrow – and see how its presence is no mere objective presence, since indeed 'so much depends / upon' this barrow, which stands forth, individualized in a single verse: that particular thing which we have been told is red, and has a wheel. This thing gains a presence not of objectivity but of value – of meaningfulness to one's life -, and it is in this mode that its presence stands forth. Its value in turn depends on all the things that depend on it: this farm where it is probably put to daily use, wheeling about all that is laid 'upon' it, ultimately participating in the provision of sustenance for the farmers and those to whom they may sell their chickens' eggs, and other goods. It participates in circumspect work and

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374 '. . . the change produces a surprise not produced by the recognition.' (PI II,xi,153)

375 'The same savage, who stabs the picture of his enemy apparently in order to kill him, really builds his hut out of wood and carves his arrow skillfully and not in effigy.' (GB, 125)

376 'But [though sound and odour may travel,] with regard to Light the case is different. For Light has its *raison d'être* in the being [not becoming] of something, but it is not a movement.' (PN 446b)

377 'And in general, even in qualitative change the case is different from what it is in local movement.' (PN 446b)

378 'Naturally, then, the parts of media between a sensory organ and its object are not all affected at once except in the case of Light [illumination], for the reason above stated, and also in the case of seeing, for the same reason; for Light is an efficient cause of seeing.' (PN 447a)

care. This case, of circumspect use and its participation in life, is parallel to Heidegger's use of the jug as an example of his account of "The Thing".

> 'The jug is a thing as a vessel – it can hold something. To be sure, this container has to be made. But its being made by the potter in no way constitutes what is peculiar and proper to the jug insofar as it is *qua* jug. The jug is not a vessel because it was made; rather the jug had to be made because it is this holding vessel . . . In the process of its making, of course, the jug must first show its outward appearance to the maker. But what shows itself here, the aspect (the *eidos*, the *idea*), characterizes the jug solely in the respect in which the vessel stands over against the maker as something made. But what the vessel of this aspect *is* as this jug, what and how the jug *is* as this jug-thing, is something we can never learn – let alone thinking properly – by looking at the outward appearance, the *idea*. That is why Plato, who conceives of the presence of what is present in terms of the outward appearance, had no more understanding of the nature of the thing that did Aristotle and all subsequent thinkers.' (TT 168)

III.5 and the metaphor of light, however, reveal that Aristotle was not merely thinking in terms of "object", as Heidegger next claims, in a shorthand accusation meant to comprise the whole Western tradition. 'Instead of "object" . . . we use the more precise expression "what stands forth.' (Heidegger TT 168) The traditional metaphor of light is obviously central to this picture, and therefore I do not find Heidegger's mythology that different from Aristotle's at least, that Heidegger should stand against him in respect of the metaphor of light. For Heidegger, as for Aristotle, 'light' is what opens, what reveals a clearing for beings: a time and space for attention.[379] When (with different mythemes, special and temporal: the clearing, the Fourfold, the Moment) Heidegger places light (and thus attention) as proceeding from Dasein (from Dasein's *effort* in *resolute* authenticity, which is his counterpart to the *via negativa*), Aristotle does the same with *nous poietikos*, which brings 'all things about'. Dasein's authenticity is the project of learning to allow the primordial presence of the world to proceed from beings.[380]

Anticipating a key theme of Ch.4, Heidegger's description of the entelechy of the jug denotes a duality within a unity: 'How does the jug's void hold? It holds by taking what is poured in. It holds by keeping and retaining what it took in. The void holds in a twofold manner: taking and keeping. The word "hold" is therefore ambiguous.' (TT 171) The ambiguity is, however, held together by a doing: 'their unity is determined by the outpouring for which the jug is fitted as a jug. The twofold holding of the void rests on the outpouring. In the outpouring, the holding is authentically how it is.' (172) And it is in this action that meaningfulness can be present, as a mode of doing: *adverbially*. This meaningful - holy, Heidegger will come to say (Ch.4) – presence that shows itself forth to the poet (who conveys this particular experience of *intersubjectivity* through the effects of writing) is spearheaded by the unified form of the symbol (the barrow). The barrow that has captivated William's attention (and ours), however, has gained its *eidos* in a circumspect use that itself shows forth a web of relations: relations that are, moreover, part of the natural network of

[379] 'When we talk in an ontically figurative way about the *lumen naturale* in human being, we mean nothing other than the existential-ontological structure of this being, the fact that it *is* in such a way as to be its there.' (H133)
[380] 'To say that it is "illuminated" means that it is cleared [Heidegger's marginal comment: "*aletheia* - openness - clearing, light, shining"] in itself as being-in-the-world, not by another being, but in such a way that it is itself the clearing [*Lichtung*]. Only for a being thus cleared existentially do objectively present things become accessible in the light or concealed in darkness.' (H133)

earth (where chickens rest and offer their eggs), sky (the rain that feeds the earth and is there too, glazing the barrow), the mortals who make barrows to use the earth, and the divinity that have offered everything and hallow the reunion of all these things themselves. And so, in becoming a symbol, it is not merely the barrow that shows itself forth in its *eidos*, but *also* the Fourfold itself, the *interrelating* of things: the state *(hexis)* of light.[381] The tone is deeply religious because it is grounded in such a sense of intimate participation with creation: the tone of revelation. All this comes together under poetic attention: that kind which Brooks & Warren have said had been evoked by the image of that barrow, on which, to repeat, 'a strangely acute and puzzling sort of attention is brought to bear.' (73)

Returning to DA; in turn, color is the property of all visible things, which cannot be seen without light.[382] All color is only potentially color until light comes about: light is the condition for actually *seeing* color.[383] Thus Aristotle regards light as the cause of color, but since it is not itself seen, it goes unnoticed and is not noticed as an actuality.[384] Although light symbolizes the cause, and colors the effects, both are metaphors. 'Blue' (the concept of blue, blueness) does not exist in the world – and what is more, it does not exist in a way that would be different from the fact that the words 'duck' and 'rabbit' are also abstract nouns determining categories. The fact is that there is absolutely nothing which is exactly-blue.[385] If I point toward a light blue on a wall or the dark blue of my pencil, the name of the color is metrically (light/dark) produced in accordance to an ideal, inexistent, standard. 'Blue' is a predicate of particular and existing things; yet the idea of blue (blueness) is spoken of in the singular – here 'blue' is an uncountable noun.[386] That it does not exist can be seen by the fact that we designate it by contrast, ametrically against other colors and hues.[387] We point out (the concept of) a particular color to others by explaining that we refer to

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[381] 'In the gift of the outpouring earth and sky, divinities and mortals dwell *together all at once*. These four, at one because of what they themselves are, belong together. Preceding everything that is present, they are enfolded into a single fourfold.' (TT 173)

[382] 'Thus colour is not visible without light but the whole colour of the particular thing is seen in the light.' (DA 418b)

[383] 'For the visible is colour and colour is what is on the surface of the thing visible in itself, and that not from its rationale but in that it has within itself the cause of its being visible.' (DA 418a)

[384] 'That which is the object of sight is the visible, and this comprises both colour and something which though it can be given by an account has no name.' (DA 418a) Later in DA Aristotle continues this point in comparison with sound. While in hearing, there is an active sounding and an active harking (noticeable because the sound takes some time), with light we only notice the activity of perception but not of the object. Since there is no manifest activity of the object (it *is lit*), light does not bear a name as a cause: 'while in some cases this [activity] has a name, as with sounding and hearing, in others both activities are unnamed. Seeing, for instance, is what we call the activity of sight, but there is no name for the activity of colour.' (426a) Again, although today we know, because we can accurately measure, that light has a velocity, Aristotle's account continues to be *phenomenally* true.

[385] If I look at a portion of a wall this blue will never be exactly the same as that blue: 'In everyday life we are virtually surrounded by impure colours. All the more remarkable that we have formed a concept of pure colours.' (Wittgenstein RC III, 59)

[386] 'A language-game: Report whether a certain body is lighter or darker than another.--But now there's a related one: State the relationship between the lightness of certain shades of colour. (Compare with this: Determining the relationship between the lengths of two sticks--and the relationship between two numbers.)--The form of the propositions in both language-games is the same: "X is lighter than Y". But in the first it is an external relation and the proposition is temporal, in the second it is an internal relation and the proposition is timeless.' (Wittgenstein RC I, 1)

[387] 'Suppose that samples of colour were preserved in Paris like the standard metre. So we explain that "sepia" means the colour of the standard sepia which is kept there hermetically sealed . . . This sample is an instrument of the language, by means of which we make colour statements. In this game, it is not something that is represented, but is a means of representation . . . in so doing we have given that object a role in our language-game . . . What looks as if it *had* to exist is part of the language. It is a paradigm in our game; something with which comparisons are made.' (PI I, 50)

'the color' of that thing, i.e. by asking them in one way or another to 'abstract', to perceptively focus on that aspect only (such as indicating, 'but can't you see the duck?'). Colors share this grammatical feature with universals, that they come to exist in reality (we 'see', understand them) because they exist as a word, but the concept (let us say, the mental image) of the word itself is missing.[388] Analogy relates to *ametria* for the same reason that universal values relate to allegory: the good is not ostensible in beings, just as blueness is not.

If 'blue' and 'God' are universals made understandable through light, then light serves to indicate the ability to understand metaphor as a means of disclosing beings. Aristotle is describing reading the world. Beings are grasped as the result of accounts of particular beings. Let us call these accounts ideas. The ability to read ideas in the world is provided by *logos*. But beings are there and ideas are here, so ideas as read already in the world are some sort of projection, in the sense that universals are what 'exist both in the understanding and reality'. (Bouwsma 63) So in this sense colors are like 'God'. When Anselm attempts to prove the existence of God, his key argument is that "We believe that thou art a being than which none greater can be conceived." The unbeliever (the "fool") does not believe in God, but understands Anselm's sentence, which defines the meaning of 'God'.[389] So the argument runs that if nothing greater can be conceived than God, and the fool understands 'God', and reality is greater than the fool's understanding, then God must exist. But there are a couple of a grammatical mistakes bearing on the form of the proof, which 'looks like the summary of the results of a series of comparisons.' (49) Firstly, as Weil has insistently said, God is a superlative and thus cannot itself be compared (as blueness cannot). Furthermore, Anselm treats both reality and the understanding as spatial elements: there are beings that exist in the understanding alone, as opposed to others that exist in reality. But Anselm does not distinguish between the kind of (ideal) beings that constitute meanings (which do not 'exist' but are understood) and those which actually exist.[390] Anselm says - and this is all he can prove - that he believes that God is like the latter.[391] The confusion, however, might have been avoided if another kind of being, which *does* exist, had been taken into account: language and namely words, which is how we commonly relate the two kinds.

Bouwsma notes that what is most essential to religious practices and that enshrines the set of attitudes which give positive meaning to 'belief in God' in the first place have been sidestepped in the proof. There is no longer any hint of praise but fact.[392] The style has changed, and thus the

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[388] 'When we're asked "What do the words 'red', 'blue', 'black', 'white' mean?" we can, of course, immediately point to things which have these colours, - but our ability to explain the meanings of these words goes no further!' (RC I, 68)

[389] 'The fool has the meaning of the word "God" in his understanding. But the fool does not realize what it is he has there. So Anselm tells him that he has a being there, "the being than which none greater can be conceived." Now the words of praise are going about in the guise of a description.' (62)

[390] 'Anselm is thinking of the meaning of an expression, the function of that expression as a thing and of the understanding as a place, and accordingly we get "something in the understanding." Now superimposed is another confusion, a difference in somethings in the understanding (meanings); namely the difference between somethings that "exist in the understanding alone" and somethings that "exist both in the understanding and in reality," perhaps the difference in meaning between such expressions as "the abominable snowman" and "ghosts" and the meaning of such expressions as "horses" and "cows."' (63)

[391] 'Regarded in this way, the fool says that it has a meaning, a kind of something, such as the expression "abominable snowman" has; but Anselm says that it has a meaning, a kind of something, such as the word "horses" has. And it is this that Anselm proves. (64)

[392] 'And what in this instance has Anselm done? Clearly, he has lifted out the shouting surroundings "with a great shout," a shouting sentence . . . And where is the wonder now, the delight, and the thanksgiving? Gone with the shout . . . And now imagine Anselm. He writes down the sentence . . . looks at it hard or he repeats it to himself and sees in it nothing like the

thinking: there is no prayer here, but philosophy. No set of passions such as those that reverence of 'God' might constrain but an argumentative discourse attempting to logically justify the concept (which McCabe says we cannot understand, and thus certainly not prove). Yet this concept can be 'seen' and grasped: not as a something, nor as a technique such as knowing how to complete a series of, say prime or even elementary numbers, but as intentions sustaining the 'language of praise' (67), the expressive manifestations of the reticent language of the heart. Bouwsma finds the surroundings of Anselm's prosaic phrase in the language of the Psalms, where what is done is not what Anselm is doing.[393] The Psalms sing, and 'What were Bach and Handel doing but praising God?' (45) Music expresses exultant praise, surely in varying degrees to the praise of silent prayer;[394] but in a completely different way from Anselm's writing. (Perhaps more like Eliot's.) Music provides grammatical form to a set of practices relevant in a set of ways to participants in that determinate way of life.[395] For religious persons, 'God' grammatically provides the ethical standard for 'good' behavior. But this is not unhinged: practice itself tells us there are better ways of doing things. Knowledge relates to hands-on experience.[396]

As expressions of love, forms of praise exist covertly as intentions and overtly as actions.[397] The former may be thought of as 'gestures' of the 'soul', and seen that the latter are obviously actual gestures of persons, there is less philosophical machinery in conceiving intentions (and the 'soul') as an abstraction, a subtraction of aspects, of the concept 'person', than as an independently existing something such as Descartes proposed (whereby I only exist because I have a mind). In sum, although it bears the form of an abstract noun (like 'necessity'), 'God' operates in the life of the believer who praises Him as an adverb, a way of doing. But the criterion, as we have seen, is that there person intends - means - the action. Only thus is it 'meaningful'. If not, the fool is a fool in the sense of Psalms: not because he does not understand, but because he carries out misdeeds:

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climax of acclaim, but a discovery. So that is what God is . . . Praise on ice - some praise, that is – looks like ever so many matters of fact.' (Bouwsma 49)

[393] 'These writers were, of course, praising God. And what praise it is! Compared to their praise, all other praise is tepid. Here the spirit rejoices. What jubilation and ecstasy!' In Dyonisian rapture, 'we sing, we praise, we are glad, we bless, we magnify, we exult, we extol, we make a noise, we raise our hands, we dance, we sound the trumpet, we play on the psaltery and harp, we dance . . .' (45)

[394] Compare in turn the polyphonic dynamics of a Handel chorus to a monophonic Gregorian chant. And the former's joyous expression compared to the latter's humble recitation. Different forms of praise, rooted in different musical forms.

[395] '. . . really there could have been no *reason* that prompted certain races of mankind to venerate the oak tree, but only the fact that they and the oak were united in a community of life, and thus that they arose together not by choice, but rather like the flea and the dog. (If fleas developed a rite, it would be based on the dog.)' (Wittgenstein, Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough 139)

[396] In baseball, for example, 'it can seem that really all the rules of a game, each act it consists of, is conventional. There is no necessity in permitting three strikes instead of two or four; in dealing thirteen cards rather than twelve or fifteen . . . But from what position is this supposed to be claimed? By someone who does or does not know what "the essence of the game" is? . . . It is perhaps not derivable from the measurements . . . that 90 feet is the best distance for setting up an essential recurrent crisis in the structure of a baseball game . . . but seeing what happens at just these distances will sometimes strike one as a discovery of the *a priori*. But also of the utterly contingent. There is no necessity that human capacities should train to just these proportions; but just these proportions reveal the limits of those capacities. Without those limits, we would not have known the possibilities. To think of a human activity as governed throughout by mere conventions, or as having conventions which may as well be changed as not, depending upon some individual or other's taste or decision, is to think of a set of conventions as tyrannical. It is worth saying that conventions can be changed because it is essential to a convention that it be in service of some project, and you do not know *a priori* which set of procedures is better than others for that project. That is, it is internal to a convention that it be open to change in convention, in the convening of those subject to it, in whose behavior it lives. So it is a first order of business of political tyranny to deny the freedom to convene.' (Cavell 119-20)

[397] 'In the ancient rites we have the use of an extremely developed gesture-language. And when I read Frazer, I continually would like to say: We still have all these processes, these changes of meaning, before us in our verbal language.' (Wittgenstein GB 135)

he is blasphemous through uttering words (intended, written for praise) which *he* does not intend. In so doing, he would be feigning to know, by showing that he can carry out a series (not of, say prime or even elementary numbers, but) of movements.

Light, however, is a way of happening. At first glance, Aristotle also seems to describe *nous poietikos* as something separate that exists in the understanding alone (which is the kind of image Anselm's proof depends on, in its theoretical separation from practice). That both kinds of *nous* refer to our capacity for abstraction is made evident in III.4 that leads up to his assertion of a duality within *nous*.[398] But unlike Anselm, this duality is maintained within Aristotle's continuous and explicit recognition that he is writing within an allegorical scheme: writing on the soul is writing about forms, which are by definition analogical imitations of beings.

*Logos* is our sixth, implicit (meta-)sense. Attention is the intentional directing of *logos*. As Aristotle claims, there is no bodily organ for attention, and 'this, as Wittgenstein tirelessly said, is because meanings, the proper way to use signs, are not in your head or in mine: they are in the language itself.' (McCabe 150) The objectivity of language accounts for the abstract detachment that is often confused for *eschatological* immortality. 'Sensation is necessarily subjective . . . but with the advent of language we create a structure of meanings which is nobody's private domain. In principle nobody could have my sensation; but in principle everybody could have my thought.' This is, McCabe continues, the reason why language can help us become objective in Hadot's sense: 'My thinking is my capacity to transcend my individuality; it is my thinking of meanings which are not just mine.' (25) Writing (what Aristotle was doing) and reading are doings where the thinking of thinking is the main characteristic, an activity consisting of an intuitive measurement of and thoughtful sensibility toward words. The question seems to be what, in light of the totality of reference of things that I know (understand, *nous*) - which have been given to me to understand through my experience (sensation, *aisthesis*) and how I and others share such experiences (language, *logos*) – tells me that certain words make sense. The question then becomes what the standard of thinking is. And the mystery is that there is no such thing: it is a sought-after relational balance. The closest metaphor in the spiritual tradition is indeed light, which expresses objectivity, but also shows that not everything depends on us for disclosure.[399] We can control everything. Sometimes some things that go are gone.

That in DA Aristotle gives substantial importance to the role of language is rather masterfully hinted (rather in the literary manner of Plato) in his concluding statements of the treatise.[400] Aristotle closes DA by setting up an analogical scheme that matches perceptive senses and skills of the soul. That it is a scheme is made salient by the fact that the last mentioned

[398] 'And again in the case of those things that exist in abstraction, the straight is like the snub in requiring extension, but what it is to be straight, if straightness and straightness is not being the same, is different. Let us call this duality. And this we judge either with something else or with the faculty in a different state.'

[399] 'What is needed is not simply the visibility of the object and the visual capacity of the eye . . . but light as well. On this view, light is a third *hexis* necessary to the activity of vision and on a par with the other two.' (Kosman 336)

[400] I am honestly unaware if anyone has as yet picked up on this particular point.

perceptive organ (tongue) is not connected to its proper physiological sense (taste).[401] Yet this is not immediately perceptible upon a first reading. (Thus we must read philosophy with the same care for words we read poems with.)

> 'It is, on the other hand, as has been said, not for being that the animal has the other senses but for well-being. Sight, for instance, if the animal dwells in air or water, or in general in something transparent, it has so that it may see, taste because of the pleasant and painful, to perceive them in its nourishment and so have appetite and be set in motion, and hearing that it may receive a sign and the tongue that it may give such to another.' (435b)

As we have seen, touch is the sense through which the animal may be destroyed, and as such represents the body as a whole (its limits).[402] All other senses, as we have seen, participate in perception by allowing the being to discern value (its well-being). This, in turn, helps us understand what kind of thing the soul is: as St. Basil has said, both animals and human beings instinctively seek their own well-being, yet we have, hopefully, developed reason to help us do this better, by sharing and comparing life experience. Sight, being such a prominent sense, stands an understanding of our surroundings; and requires, as we have discussed, a transparent medium. Taste pertains to value, the aesthetic and moral: pleasure and pain, the good and the bad, pursuit and aversion: *boulesis*. The understanding on which language depends, this Aristotle denotes in the sense of hearing. Yet smell, which Aristotle regards as a minor faculty,[403] is ignored on behalf of a far more important faculty that is articulated by the training (i.e. conventional, not natural) of the tongue: speech, the possibility of communication with others.[404] With this inscription, Aristotle is claiming that the attention we can invest in our shared understanding – the common *logos* we call language - is of itself an 'organ' for perceiving and forming forms of the world.

## *Logos spermatikos*

The two main powers equiprimordial to attention, then, are hearing (*nous*), which grasps, and the tongue (*logos*), which makes signs. But the making of signs is enchained to there being others to hear what the tongue says. In *logos* signs (words) and forms ('wax signs') are united in a single articulated notion dedicated to remind us of our possibility of sharing forms, thus signs, and thus a world. But DA III.5 and poetry share a common tradition: as in Stevens' poem, metaphor is welded with light. We have seen that in Aristotle, light is an *effective* cause, i.e. 'the agency producing the result'. (Blackburn 60) The religious picture of grace as the cause of *metanoia* relates back to the

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[401] Tancred-Lawson (translator) completely misreads these words, 'which hardly fit the scheme of explanation for the senses other than touch with which the work is ending, looked very much like a ham-fisted later addition.' (On the Soul p.251)
[402] Without touch, the animal's body 'can have no other sense, every ensouled thing being, as we have said, a tactile body'. (435a)
[403] In II.9 Aristotle discusses the sense of smell, which is a 'less well defined' sense than the others. 'The reason is that we do not have this sense in an accurate way but worse than many animals. For man smells badly and perceives none of the smell-objects except the painful and pleasant ones, as his organ is not accurate.' (421a)
[404] 'The emphasis which natural selection has put upon communicative ability is overwhelming.' (Richards 21)

Stoic notion of *logos spermatikos*, which in turn is a version of *nous poietikos*. Returning to Wilkes' intuition, the noetic light of III.5 is (the thinking which) makes thinking possible. What Aristotle is describing (not explaining) are the miraculous (inexplicable) conditions for thinking. When Aristotle described the affectedness of *nous*, he follows the model of Anaxagoras.[405] Significantly enough, Anaxagoras was one of the philosophers chosen to exemplify philosophical wisdom in NE (Ch.2). And here again, for Aristotle clearly 'had great respect for his use of mind in cosmic explanation. A man who says that the presence of *nous* in the cosmos as a whole as well as in living things is the cause of all order and arrangement'. (Kosman 339) Interestingly enough, Anaxagoras is also the source of the concept of the directing mind.[406] Yet Aristotle distances himself from Anaxagoras on one point: regardless of whether the mind can partake in the cosmic principle, thinking is a part of the soul: it is not literally separate from the being.[407]

This accounts for the specific sense of cause that qualifies *nous poietikos*: Aristotle has said is stands as a skill does toward the matter it uses. It seems to follow that what *nous poietikos* 'makes' is *logos*: this mind is *legein*, the activity of thinking, reasoning, saying. But our awareness of this skill is itself an actualized knowledge, a contemplation of thinking: 'for while knowledge in the actualized state is identical with the fact known, knowledge in the state of potentiality, though temporally prior in the individual case, does not in general even have temporal priority.' (DA 430a) The soul which is the place of forms possesses all potential thoughts (in a timeless, non-phenomenal, non-manifest way) before they come into being. But when they do, it seems as if they were there already (which is the justification for Plato's *anamnesis*). Yet this place of forms - let us say of *words*, which do not exist at all before they come out as we speak (instantaneously, like light), 'in any case thinks nothing without the other.' (430a) Our passive knowledge only exists when we think: but when we speak we do not think beforehand of those precise words and then speak them, we just say what we intend, what we are trying to put across. The truly fantastic (and 'phantastic') thing about *logos*, our 'formula' or 'ratio' that makes what we say adequate, constrained in relation to, signify within reality is that it just works. Given normal conditions, we all learn. This 'formula' is itself the mean that is never 'present' yet must be assumed as a standard by means of which we compare what we think or say with what is present. We only understand in relation to the language that is our common understanding, and that provides our activities with sense. Thus 'light' is what in turn denotes clear or reasonable thinking: reasonable in relation to *logos*, our objective organ. Clear thinking is the attempt to think within and in contrast to the thinking of others: there is no solitary-thinking (no 'private language') because there is no 'language' of individuals. [408] So at least in part (but a significant part), I would take Aristotle's allegory of light to be intended as a sort of praise of

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[405] *Nous* is 'something simple and unaffected and has nothing in common with anything, as Anaxagoras says'. (429b) Kosman tells the anecdote that Anaxagoras 'was affectionately called in antiquity, Mr. Mind'. (339)

[406] 'It is necessary, then, since the intellect thinks all things, that the intellect be unmixed, "that it may rule", as Anaxagoras puts it, which is a way of saying that it is thus so that it may have cognition.' (DA 429a)

[407] 'Aristotle makes clear that however correct Anaxagoras was in thinking of mind as a cosmic principle, the present discussion must first come to terms with the nature of mind as determined by the functional psychic definition of Aristotle's treatise.' Thus he states that the 'intellect (by which I mean that whereby the soul thinks and supposes) is before it thinks in actuality none of the things that exist.' This is 'a strong statement of the fact that although Aristotle's discussion of mind means to take account of the features that were important to Anaxagoras, what he is talking about is mind as a particular faculty of the human psuche' (Kosman 340) It is, however, metaphorically separate, as the sentence that immediately follows in DA shows: 'This makes it unreasonable that it be mixed with the body – for, if so, it would have to have some quality . . . or indeed have some organ like the perceptive faculty, whereas in fact it has none.' (429a)

[408] 'The reasonable man does *not have* certain doubts.' (Wittgenstein OC 220)

the existence of *logos* itself, of the fact that we possess the conditions of possibility of thinking, of the wonder that we exist thus, as if a 'this in a that'. And, incidentally, this style of thinking, grounded in language as a source, also provides a philosophical interpretation for John 1:1.[409]

This sense of wonder of philosophic wisdom is what relates III.5 to cosmic reason (*logos spermatikos*), whereby *logos* was considered the cause of both individual thought and the possibility – given philosophical wisdom - for cosmic consciousness, which is, however, tantamount to the self's objectivity.[410] The cause *relapses into itself* in the sense that objectivity is to be found within a language. This is why for the ancient Greeks, divinity was not an external but internal concept, since our *logos* stems from within and may then extend outwards to embrace the universe.[411] Within religion, only the mystic accepts this view inasmuch as it conceives divinity as an effective cause of the self instead of something exterior.[412] Moreover, since God is Mystery, It cannot be petitioned in any ordinary sense.[413] Either way, *logos* is in both these traditional philosophical and mystical accounts perceived as a creative energy that, spearheaded, controlled through attention and thus functioning as a directing mind, can take the soul as its material, and *make* it: not freely fashioned, stylized (Foucault) but in relation to reasonable, objective, accounts. It is in this sense that *nous poietikos* is a genus in the manner of a skill: it is a making, a *poiesis*.

The specificity of *poetic* attention is that it may also (in certain cases, i.e. certain poems) constitute a thinking of *logos* itself. It may because, as a kind of saying, poems have the formal ability to summon readers into this relation. What is 'formal' stays put: it is immortal thought on paper. What is ontological – the process of thinking - varies case by case. Poems establish this condition by pushing us into what we shall term a (tentative) knowledge of ignorance. Poems implicitly show us that we do not know. I take this as the oracular position of what Aristotle describes as philosophical wisdom. And this knowledge of ignorance (knowledge also in the sense that something is said, asserted) is partly grounded in universals, which as we seen pertain to analogical thinking. Concluding McCabe's line of thinking, although we do not understand the meaning of a word like 'God', it also makes us, by shaping the limits of our understanding, since such literal and nonsensical statements 'are our way of asserting that the riches of religious imagery are more than the art-form of a particular culture (though, of course, they are that) but are a part of our access to our mystery beyond our understanding which we do not create, but which rather creates us and our understanding and our whole world.' (McCabe 27)

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[409] 'In the beginning [*arche*] there was the word [*logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'

[410] By "cosmic consciousness," we mean the consciousness that we are a part of the cosmos, and the consequent dilation of our self throughout the infinity of universal nature.' (Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life 266)

[411] In the words of Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher's wisdom (that which Aristotle sets above *phronesis*) resides in not forgetting 'that a human being has close kinship with the whole human race – not a bond of blood or seed, but a community of mind. And you have forgotten this too, that every man's mind is god and has flowed from that source'. (12,26)

[412] 'The Mystery is unfathomable, but it is not *remote* as the gods are remote. The gods live somewhere else, on Olympus or above the starry sky. The Mystery is everywhere and always, in every grain of sand and every flash of colour . . . We could not literally approach God or get nearer to God for God is already nearer to us than we are to ourselves. God is at the ultimate depth of our beings making us to be ourselves.' (McCabe 59)

[413] This involves (as for Weil) a certain dose of atheism, of iconoclasm, for the mystic is 'the atheist with no gods to worship, no gods to pray to, no gods worth praying to. Whatever prayer is going to mean to people in the Jewish tradition, such as Christians, it cannot mean petitioning a god. It cannot mean cajoling and persuading a god to be on your side.' (McCabe 56)

## *Anima* and the Imagination

Ignorance is precisely what Vico regards as the cause of poetic wisdom. With Vico, we gain understanding of attention as a historical development. As for Aristotle, for Vico the mind begins in the senses, and it is mankind's primitive attempts to name what they did not understand (and thus make sense of the world) which constituted the first wisdom of man.[414] It is precisely mankind's possibility to name-out-of-ignorance what Vico calls poetic wisdom.[415] This kind of wisdom, however, is quite different from what we moderns (recall Burnyeat's junking of Aristotle) might accept under the term. Indeed, Vico claims that our initial way of knowing was poetic, not scientific: this first thinking was that of the mystical singers of *epodai*, who gave birth to both poetry and prayer.[416] This does not mean that 'poetic' does not classify as a particular kind of knowledge: only that *aisthesis* makes for a different sort of wisdom than *episteme*.

For an example of aesthetic perception, Vico describes how thunder would have astonished the primitive gentiles to such a degree that, they would have animated the skies by establishing a comparison with what they did understand: their own being. In short, it must have formed 'an impression so violent' that, 'astonished by the great effect whose cause they did not know . . . the nature of the human mind leads it to attribute its own nature to the effect'. (Vico 117) This establishes an imaginative ground for the creation of divinities out of an ignorance of beings.[417] Imagination makes things come alive: a keen interest for our capacity to animate, to make other beings come alive in terms of what we are, is the common link between Aristotle's *nous poietikos*, the Stoic's *logos spermatikos* (here at the cosmic level that would lead to 'God'), and the Romantics' idealization of the Imagination. Although veneration of the Imagination poses its particular dangers, this impulse to assign *anima* to beings we have no scientific knowledge of - or that bear resemblances to our own – is not a matter of error.[418] It is simply a case of starting a relation with, or trying to come to terms with, what we do not know. In other words, it constitutes the instinctive mode of *learning through problem solving* we call interpretation – and which is always the point at which we stand when we come into contact with a poem; or, in general, when we have lost our bearings in life, our sense of how to describe things. This is usually prompted by events where there is no grasp of a direct cause, but only the perception of effects we do not know the meaning

[414] Poetic wisdom, 'the first wisdom of the gentile world, must have begun with a metaphysics not rational and abstract like that of learned men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been, who, without power of imagination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination.' (Vico 116)

[415] 'This metaphysics was their poetry, a faculty born with them (for they were furnished by nature with these senses and imaginations); born of their ignorance of causes, for ignorance, the mother of wonder, made everything wonderful to men who were ignorant of everything.' (Vico 116)

[416] 'And nothing is dearer to poets than singing the marvels wrought by sorceresses by means of incantations. All this is to be explained by a hidden sense the nations have of the omnipotence of God. From this sense springs another by which all peoples are naturally led to infinite honors to divinity.' (120) Thus wonder leads to praise.

[417] '. . . they gave the things they wondered at substantial being after their own ideas, just as children do, whom we see take inanimate things in their hands and play with them and talk to them as though they were living persons.' (Vico 117)

[418] 'If a narrator places the priest-king of Nemi and "the majesty of death" side by side, he realizes that they are the same. The life of the priest-king shows what is meant by that phrase. Someone who is affected by the majesty of death can give expression to this through such a life. – This, of course, is also no explanation, but merely substitutes one symbol for another. Or: one ceremony for another. No *opinion* serves as the foundation for a religious symbol. And only an opinion can involve an error.' (Wittgenstein, Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough 123)

of. It all starts with a question. So 'meaning' seems to be the knowledge of causes – but this is only scientific-'meaning'.

What often stands amiss is that 'mind' stands in this category of things (and thus Aristotle writes esoterically of the active mind). Whereas science correctly pertains to descriptions of beings perceived by the senses, it cannot claim to sense perceive thinking and understanding. So whereas mythology used to name gods to explain 'everything appertaining to the sky, the earth, and the sea', we 'nowadays reverse this practice in respect of spiritual things, such as the faculties of the human mind, the passions, virtues, vices, sciences and arts'. (Vico 128) The point, which Aristotle had made clear in DA, is that 'when we wish to give utterance to our understanding of spiritual things, we must seek aid from our imagination to explain them and, like painters, form human images of them.' The first people, however, who explained beings through gods, 'did the opposite and more sublime thing: they attributed senses and passions . . . to bodies as vast as sky, sea, and earth.' (128)

The axiom, as Vico puts it, is the analogical (or metric) conception whereby 'man in his ignorance makes himself the rule of the universe, for in the examples cited he has made of himself an entire world.' (128-9) Imagination creates worlds. But behind this creation lies ignorance. 'So that, as rational metaphysics teaches that man becomes all things by understanding them . . . this imaginative metaphysics shows that man becomes all things by not understanding them'. There is thus, for Vico, two modes of animating - or, we can say following Heidegger, 'being there'. Yet it is the poetic, and not the scientific proposition which perhaps 'is truer . . . for when man understands he extends his mind and takes in the things, but when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them.' (130) Vico describes two modes of attention. In the rational, as Aristotle explains, I can become all things by grasping forms: but I can only do this 'by understanding'. The poetic, however, is moved by wonder and ignorance, and here I project what I know onto things I do not know. This gives birth to religion, and myths in general.

It may not be immediately clear to us in what sense it is truer to animate beings by projecting our mind into them - which is tantamount to saying reading our mind in other beings - and perceiving them thusly, than it is to attempt to perceive them 'through' 'the understanding', i.e. scientifically. For Vico, the 'rational metaphysics' of scientific understanding is itself a mode of reading allegory, subsequent to the primitive form of reading the world.[419] We have so become accustomed to this mode of reading that it is difficult for us to return to the original mode.[420] This return is the counter-therapy of philosophy, for in the scientific mode we are more easily prone to fail to see that we are already dealing with an account since a sense of proof hides the fact that how we establish such proof is already through mythology, i.e. by making a picture.[421] Of course this is

[419] 'Later, as these vast imaginations shrank and the power of abstraction grew, the personifications were reduced to diminutive signs. Metonymy drew a cloak of learning over the prevailing ignorance of these origins of human institutions, which have remained buried until now. Jove becomes so small and light that he is flown about by an eagle.' (128)

[420] 'It is equally beyond our power to enter into the vast imagination of those first men, whose minds were not in the least abstract, refined or spiritualized, because they were entirely immersed in the senses, buffeted by the passions, buried in the body. That is why we said above that we can scarcely understand, still less imagine, how those first men thought who founded gentile humanity.' (Vico 118)

[421] How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states and about behaviourism arise? - The first step is the one that altogether escapes notice. We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we

not to say we should do away with pictures: our ways of life are based upon the certainty which certain pictures grant us. To speak of pictures (or poems or myths) in this way is not to accuse them or their authors of spinning lies, but stating that they establish a ground for sharing a groundless world.[422] Education and ordinary life experience consecrates certainty to the world so early on that normally we do not come to perceive this void that lies beneath our constructed world unless we later come into skeptical thought.[423] The picture, however, must be a useful (reasonable, plausible) one if it is to find continuity in forms of life.[424] What constitutes rational attention is that it grasps by understanding - which, as we have seen, comprises knowing signs, words; so here words must be shared, must be, as Vico will say, 'univocal'.

Aesthetic perception, on the other hand, makes not for understanding in this sense but for power and impact. Here music, and not words, is the best analogue. This is what accounts for the 'sublime' in poetry.[425] When Vico classifies the latter as a 'truer' perception, it is because it is based on an actual perception of something, as opposed to the understanding of an abstract word or thought representing it. This is reducible to an aforementioned, elementary logical distinction between a thing and its word: a lightning bolt and 'lightning', or even a person and 'person'. Vico reminds us that our modern, rational mode of reading the world has lost touch with a mode of being with beings due to our increasing linguistic habit of detaching beings from words on account of abstract signs.[426] In this sense, Vico is accusing modern man of being iconoclastic to such a degree that he has forgotten the starker way of having words directly mean beings: for us, Cartesians, words no longer are the beings but abstractions, categories.[427] (This is the equivalent of blasphemy, as per St. Antony's rebuke.) For 'primitive people', however, 'the sign coincides with what it indicates. The sign itself can represent what it indicates not only in the sense of replacing it, but in such a way that the sign itself always is what is indicated.' (BT H82) This we may term perceptive holism, which is the way I intend to use the concept of poetic attention. This mode of signification is intrinsic to attention because at this point the sign precedes abstraction: it is the identification of that being-with;[428] the result of the impact that makes form in a testimonial utterance. The 'content' or 'meaning'(fullness) of the sign is an experience, and is what gives rise to ethical discussions of literature. Formally it is synthetic - and in literary studies we call this use of signs the metaphor.

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shall know more about them - we think. But that is just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter. For we have a definite concept of what it means to learn to know a process better. (The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one that we thought quite innocent.) (Wittgenstein, PI I, 308)

[422] 'At the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded.' (Wittgenstein, On Certainty 253)

[423] 'This statement appeared to me fundamental; if it is false, what are "true" or "false" any more?!' Or, 'If my name is *not* L.W., how can I rely on what is meant by "true" and "false"?' (Wittgenstein, On Certainty 514;515)

[424] 'The picture of the earth as a ball is a *good* picture, it proves itself everywhere, it is also a simple picture – in short, we work with it without doubting it.' (Wittgenstein, On Certainty 147)

[425] 'For it has been shown that it was deficiency of human reasoning power that gave rise to poetry so sublime'. (Vico 120)

[426] 'But the nature of our civilized minds is so detached from the senses, even in the vulgar, by abstractions corresponding to all the abstract terms our languages abound in, and so refined by the art of writing, and as it were spiritualized by the use of numbers . . . that it is naturally beyond our power to form the vast image of this mistress called "Sympathetic Nature."' (118)

[427] 'Men shape the phrase with their lips but have nothing in their minds; for what they have in mind is falsehood, which is nothing; and their imagination no longer avails to form a vast false image.' (118)

[428] 'The "coincidence" is not an identification of hitherto isolated things, but rather the sign has not yet become free from that for which it is a sign. This kind of use of signs is still completely absorbed in the being of what is indicated so that a sign as such cannot be detached at all. The coincidence is not based on a first objectification, but rather upon the complete lack of such an objectification.' (BT H82)

## The Metaphor as a Primitive Impression

Vico calls the metaphor the 'most luminous' trope (129) for its capacity to bring *anima* to other beings, and terms it an 'imaginative universal', or an 'imaginative class concept' (119, 128), since it has the capacity to holistically subsume (again, still as a perception, before abstraction), or capture "the essence of", a being. This is the making of symbols, universals, icons: all products of allegory.[429] Metaphor is simply a condensed fable, an animation of a being from the perspective of - and thus in relation to - the perceiving being.[430] Poetic language is primordial in this very basic sense: the primitives determined new beings in relation to the perceiver. This is evidenced by our language, where such imagery remains. Thus, for example, we have 'head for top of beginning . . . the eyes of needles . . . the hands of a clock . . . heaven or the sea smiles; the wind whistles . . . the farmers of Latium used to say the fields were thirsty, bore fruit,' etc. These beings lit up. It becomes clear that metaphors not only proceed from circumspect being-with (the farmers' understanding of parched earth), but also from the need to explain new things. Poems often surge from such a need – the poet sees something in the world (or 'sees' something in his mind) that provokes an impact, makes an impression, from which the rest of the poem is composed. But since the imagination is all made of grasped forms (which as fragments may then, like words, be articulated in infinite manners), there is always a perceptive experience at the foundation of a poem. Life and its beings are the source: using Aristotle's metaphor, poetic attention, in this case, is life's leaving an impression on the poet, which then crafts an impression on paper.[431] Vico remarks how figures of speech, 'which have hitherto been considered ingenious inventions of writers, were necessary modes of expression of all the first poetic nations'. It was only later, as has been indicated, that such expressions 'became figurative, when, with the further development of the human mind, words were invented which signified abstract forms or genera comprising their species or relating parts with their wholes.' (131) So poetry actually starts from a way of seeing reality – and it comes first as a mode of perception.[432]

What we must note is how these two ways of 'seeing' (grasping as perceiving beings/understanding concepts) determine very distinct ways of reading and thus of being in the world. For today we seldom or no longer see an eye when we hear 'the eye of a needle', or a head

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[429] '. . . fables being imaginative class concepts . . . mythologies must have been the allegories corresponding to them . . . allegories signify the diverse species of the diverse individuals comprised under these genera. So that they must have a univocal signification connoting a quality common to all their species and individuals (as Achilles connotes an idea of valor common to all strong men . . .) such that these allegories must be the etymologies of the poetic languages, which would make their origins all univocal, whereas those of the vulgar languages are more often analogical.' (Vico 128-9)

[430] The metaphor 'is most praised when it gives sense and passion to insensate things . . . Thus every metaphor is a fable in brief.' (129)

[431] Since it stems from an attention to beings, 'Poetry . . . is incorrigibly particular and concrete – not general and abstract.' (Brooks 68) Exemplifying with Pound's explanation of how he came to write "In a Station of the Metro", a very brief Imagist poem similar to a *haiku*. The poem reads, 'The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough.' Pound recalls that getting out of a metro in Paris, he 'saw suddenly a beautiful face and then another beautiful woman, and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me'. (71, in Gaudier-Brzeska. *A Memoir*. New Directions, 1960) In sum, 'Pound's experience at the Metro station was obviously intensely meaningful for him. He was not simply a theorist having a game with images.' (72)

[432] 'And here begins the overthrow of two common errors of the grammarians: that prose speech is proper speech, and poetic speech improper; and that prose speech came first and afterward speech in verse.' (131)

on a mountain. Reading poetry is largely remembering how to do that; poetic attention is attending to words in circumspect care, reading what is there. Vico's claim that historically song and poetry precede prose and abstract writing in turn connects to an accusation against writing, since words, the abstract signs of writing, detach and distance us from beings, whereas speech involves presence (Ch.4). But a defense of writing lies precisely in a recovery of reading, and this means of the imagination. The last time I flew on an airplane, the onboard meal box had an advertisement printed on it: 'Nothing can match the pleasure of soaring above the world, with the wind beneath your wings, enjoying a natural, top quality meal.' The subordinate clause is there to add "poetic effect": its intention is to turn me into the airplane. Suddenly, I am told, I am not flying in an airplane, I am flying. The clause intends to make me see poetically: I am to transform into the plane. Poetic attention thus seems to be my capacity to become what words intimate, to imaginatively imitate what is meant. Notwithstanding, even though in this case the expression that assigns me wings actually participates within an actual flying experience, it is not a good one. The expression itself is not new, it is a banal analogy: the words do not themselves convey the sense of wonder I would have if I suddenly won wings; to achieve this impression, musicality would help.[433] The sublime does not to persuade rhetorically through syllogisms, but sweeps understanding away. According to Pseudo-Longinus, sublimity is the mark of the better poets, and consists in 'a certain distinction and excellence in expression', which does not move its audience by 'persuasion but by transport.' (Longinus 1,3-4) It is not a question, therefore, of reason, but of the enchantment of *epode*, the power of words.[434] We thus return to the problem of fancy, for if 'our soul is uplifted by the true sublime; it takes a proud flight, and is filled with joy and vaunting, as though it had itself produced what it has heard' (7,2), then what rescues Vico's holistic perception from the detachment abstraction of words offer: if not from reason, then what delivers attention from the imagination?

## The Garden

Marvell's "The Garden"[vi] at first glance appears to be a lyric of pre-Romantic praise of the imagination. Written in octaves of iambic tetrameter, it is divided into two large sections, with transitional episodes. The poet has discovered the delights of the primordial garden and bucolically praises the contemplation of Nature as that which frees the mind of the poet from the world of the They. In the real, modern world, Nature has been broken up into particulars ('the palm, the oak, the bays . . . single herb or tree'), fragmented words used by vain men to strive for prizes. This is the world of practical means, of attachment to externals, and also of the Apollinian poet[435] who works for laurel or pay. To these 'uncessant labours' of busy bees is opposed the true prize of the

[433] Compare with King Claudius' words: 'My words fly up, my thoughts remain below./ Words without thoughts never to heaven go.' (Hamlet III,iii,100-103) The coupled bursts, rising in tone, of 'fly up' are contrasted with the tonal drop of the more closed vowels 'remain below', which is then paralleled in rhyme with 'heaven go' - leaving 'fly up' alone and light. Although these words serve to confess a failed prayer, their form goes much further in suggesting a sense of flight than the advertisement.

[434] 'Our persuasions we can usually control, but the influences of the sublime bring power and irresistible might to bear, and reign supreme over every hearer.' (Longinus §I)

[435] The bay laurel will later refer to Apollo's hunting of Daphne, and was also a prize in ancient Pythian games.

contemplation of universals forms, to which nature itself responds by synthesizing, weaving 'all flow'rs and all trees' into an ataraxic garland 'of repose'. The aim of life (that Aristotle has defined as contemplation in NE) here (and in the later Romantics) finds its object in Nature ('this delicious solitude'), as opposed to the rude conformity of society. But as the poet is slowly pulled into this garden which, stanza by stanza, closes around him during this first section, Marvell drops an initial hint of dubiety (in a fashion similar to Ashbery's question-statement) by closing a question word order with an exclamation mark.[436] In the same second stanza, a condition is implied: 'Your sacred plants, if here below,/ Only among the plants will grow.' This doubt implied by the conditional 'if' already follows from the implied question above – and both times falling upon the word 'here'. There are sacred plants, and there are regular plants. Those sacred, we gather, are Fair, Quiet and Innocent (are indeed like these hints, covert meanings which we have been told can be found 'here' - in the poem). And yet the poet – despite continuing to sing the delights of the garden – is unsure whether those plants grow among the others. What the poet does know is that the delight the garden avails is solipsistic ('this delicious solitude'). So 'here' there is an implied tension (so implied we might easily overlook), since sacred plants do not grow alone but only among other plants. The poet's doubt is as to whether they are 'here below', in the world and in the poem: if they can be found.

In the third stanza, the poet evokes the biblical Fall, where lovers cut their names into the garden's trees, disintegrating the Edenic tranquility through their passion. The picture is that of Aristotle's linguistic division of the continuum, whereby reason divides the substance of reality into words. The poet, however, heeds the call of Nature ('Little, alas, they know or heed') and only always finds the name of the trees themselves, as opposed to the names of lovers' objects of desire. Here there is a distinction from Vico's poetic perception, since this poet's attention is to these beings, not the projection of his desires: the poet's higher purpose, it seems, is to sing the sap of the trees, and not odes to his mistress. This would be the Adamic language that can name the true nature of things: according to Vico not the first, but the sacred language.[437] For Vico, poetic wisdom is born in ignorance, whilst divine wisdom is born in knowledge.[438] This is the tension that lives in the Garden and affects poetry: whether the creative faculty of naming is made by the primitive mind (*phantasia*) or by the divine mind (*episteme*). Or by a mixture of both.

Aristotle too, as we have seen, grounded attention in the senses; yet he too was wary of perception alone, for it provides no guarantee of truth. Discussing the imagination (*phantasia*), Aristotle says that although 'the earlier thinkers assert the identity of understanding and perceiving', they 'should, however, also have spoken at the same time about error, as this is a more peculiar feature of animals, and the soul spends more time in this state.' (DA 427a) For, making what

[436] 'Fair Quiet, have I found thee here, / And Innocence, thy sister dear!' Both feelings of question and exclamation are thus grammatically compounded.

[437] 'For that first language, spoken by the theological poets, was not a language in accord with the nature of things it dealt with (as must have been the sacred language invented by Adam, to whom God granted divine onomathesia, the giving of names to things according to the nature of each), but was a fantastic speech making use of physical substances endowed with life and most of them imagined to be divine.' (Vico 127-8)

[438] Primitive man's egocentric creative fantasy 'was infinitely different from that of God. For God, in his purest intelligence, knows things, and, by knowing them, creates them'. (117)

would become a basic Stoic point, appearances deceive.[439] For Aristotle, *phantasia* is essentially 'that in virtue of which we say that an image occurs to us'. (428a) Given that the soul is the place of forms, the imagination is the garden of signs, of fragments grasped – but not necessarily understood, nor organized as thinking is.

The suspicion that Marvell is ironizing the Garden as fancy continues as the Greek gods behave as rude, busy bees in 'their race', and a quaint pair (Apollo the god-poet and Pan the playful satyr) hunt their mistresses as lustful prizes. After the lovers had run their 'passion's heat', the delights of the garden seem to reside in this calm 'retreat' of the 'here' of poetry, where gods, the myths, live. These gods, however, desire our women, our mortal life; they are inscribed within our world, among the common plants. The ladies, after all, were hunted not only for love-making, but for an immortal story told in music (the lyre and the rustic flute made of hollowed reeds). Myth is written into the sap of time: what counts as poetry in the end are the accounts that continue to hold effects as descriptions of mankind and the world, the pictures we continue to use: the pictures that chase us. Thus the gods 'Still in a tree did end their race'. The ambiguity of 'still', which can be either be read as an adverb or adjective, as 'Yet' or 'Frozen'/'Carved', indicate these intimations.

Yet this is a close reading, fruit of repeated passages and attention to words and their duplicities: what initially lies at face value – our first impressions – are those of a bucolic praise of the imagination. But thoughtful (which means repeated, or slow, or intense) reading shows that Marvell is not (only) talking about the imagination in general but (also) poetry as a mode of imagination in particular. This impression congeals in the fifth octave, where the poet's Garden comes alive and inebriates him. The food of the gods, Bacchus' wine and Olympic nectar('ine'), along with an Edenic curious peach (an image semantically 'rhyming' with apple), which feeds thought, may yet make him immortal. All delightful stems from the skies and trees into his hands; and yet, from always looking up, he stumbles on some stupid melons under his feet. By the end of this stanza, the pleasures of the Garden have seduced, and then trapped him ('Ensnar'd with flow'rs, I fall on grass.'). As in day-dreaming, too much imagination, as Aristotle notes, can make fantasy seem real.[440] Taking the provenance of words (and thus accounts) to be the wondr'ous sky might lead us to fall flat on our face. This tone marks the passage into the second section, which takes place 'within' 'the imagination' of the poet.

'Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,/ Withdraws into happiness;' and this is puzzling. For 'pleasure less' might mean that the mind starts feeling less pleasure – and thus is sobering up again, returning to its normal self; or (perhaps less evident) that the mind is diminished because of

[439] Certain impressions, namely the 'perception of special sensibles . . . admits falsity to the smallest possible extent', since about these 'it is impossible to be deceived, as sight is connected with colour, hearing with sound and taste with flavour [since] . . . Each sense then judges about the special objects and is not deceived as to their being a colour or sound, but only as to what the coloured or sounding *thing* is or where it is.') (DA 418a ) 'There are, however, also false appearances, in connection with whose objects true supposition simultaneously occurs. For instance, the sun appears to be a foot across.' This is a case of discernment that decides upon true or false perception, 'and this already admits of falsity – as to a thing's being white there is no falsity, but there is as to a white thing's being this or something else'. (428b)

[440] 'And because of the duration of acts of imagination and their resemblance to sense-perceptions, it is in virtue of these that animals do many things, some, such as the beasts, through the occasional occlusion of their intellects by emotion, illness and sleep.' (DA 429a) This alone would provide (for future work) a solid, initial base for evidence in Aristotle that his defense of the imagination is not opposed to Stoic wariness, *pace* Nussbaum.

pleasure. The first interpretation seems Quietist, the second reminds us of Bossuet.[441] The stanza indeed appears to point to the former, since although the mind grasps analogous forms from the world ('that ocean where each kind/ Does straight its own resemblance find'), 'it creates, transcending these/ Far other worlds, and other seas'. The mind can create other minds, other realities within it: it is transported, it seems, but to nowhere in particular, for it is dissolved into the continuum that is the absence of language, and thus of thinking, whereby everything becomes One and no distinctions are possible: 'Annihilating all that's made/ To a green thought in a green shade'. Not only - deep into the Garden (in what would become Freud's unconscious) - is everything reduced to a single color, but is half-lit. Here thought vegetates.

This points toward the Skeptic's escape from making distinctions: the technique of *isostheneia*, which might be linked to the Quietists' thoughtless contemplation: an abolition of all contraries and distinctions, of values and belief, of the possibility for a common ground of knowledge. Whereas in the Stoics *ataraxia* was the result of having established correct distinctions, i.e. the knowledge we reach in belief and certainty, for the Skeptics tranquility is the pleasurable goal in itself: one needs simply to relinquish all choice and follow the flow of necessity – but without going through the Stoic steps of discerning impressions (Bossuet's grammar). For the Skeptics, the 'disease is not one of false belief; belief itself is the illness – belief as a commitment, a source of concern, care, and vulnerability.' (Nussbaum TD 284) The Skeptic's aim is the dissolution of the concerns a life of thoughtful commitment entails. This is effected through a skill of establishing contradictions, for 'one learns how to do something, namely, to set up oppositions among impressions and beliefs', (286) so as to neutralize choices the mind has imposed on nature: 'the way life actually goes in nature – this is the end.' (290) This may be the Garden Marvell praises, achieved by an equal leveling of opposites (*isostheneia*) through a very anti-Stoic, deliberate evasion from choice. On the one hand, this could be the counter-therapy required to acquit us from logocentric rationalism, a method to clear thinking from perception;[442] the evasion from censorial moralism defended by the aesthetes, which poetry deserves if it is to stand on its own ground. It applies as a general defense of plain uttering: of description over ethical positions; a mode of speech which can also be trained, namely in the mode of phenomenological or psychological attention to the present: just speaking.[443] This seems to be the oracle's descriptive standpoint. Although thinking may come to a still, in terms of perception this amounts to freely floating on the impressions of the present, in *phantasia*, 'by merely a combination of impressions (*phantasiai*) as to how things are, and desires . . . [*Phantasiai*] are different from beliefs because they involve no commitment as to how things are; so, when they oppose one another, there is no contradiction.' (291) This gives us a negative definition of the organizing force of beliefs, given that the Skeptical view involves 'no attempt to sort out and coordinate the different impressions, arriving at a general view.' (291) If this is what the Garden is, then it truly is in the shade, for without belief there is no

[441] And in turn remind us of how Stoic vigilance intended to curtail the confusion between reality and impression that stems from an appetite for pleasurable fancy instead of for realistic, reasonable, joy *(boulesis)*.

[442] Nussbaum summarizes its role in Sextus Empiricus, the Pyrrhonist Skeptical philosopher: 'Equal force, *isostheneia*, is the apparently equal persuasiveness or plausability of the opposing claims where "neither of the contending discourses lies ahead of any other as being more convincing." Suspension, *epoche*, is a "standstill of reason through which we neither deny nor assert anything." Freedom from disturbance, *ataraxia*, is "the unburdened and tranquil condition of the soul". (TD 286, cf. PH 1,8-10)

[443] 'This [the pupil] does, telling what strikes her about what is at hand, in the manner of someone making a report – not with belief and conviction, but going through what she is experiencing.' (Sextus PH 1,197)

certainty.[444] We 'stop short of any assent to a view that such and such is actually the case.' (292) Yet although Skepticism may be an irresponsible position in ethical terms, it can be a sensible one in terms of reading and perception in general, for we want to see what is there.

So it may also hold some truth for the reader, given that metaphors and poetic effects are a matter of producing impressions we should be receptive to. But just spewing and heeding words is insufficient criteria for establishing good poetry – just reactive attention does not discern worth – although it is a part of the whole process of learning to read poetry (as well as writing). As McCabe says, even though literal assertions about *esse* are nonsense, 'the caveat I have to make with images and with metaphorical statements is that they can be denied as well as asserted.' (57) In short, a literal critique of metaphor is required to constrain the otherwise limitless continuity of images.[445] What Bossuet ultimately attacks in the Quietists is their over-interpretation of the words of mystics, a critical hubris that leads them to abandon the essential lessons of the tradition and read them out of context. He essentially accuses them of adding words to the text, having been led astray by an unbridled passion for metaphorical language. At the root of the problem is a lesson in literary criticism. In Bossuet's own words,

> 'The new mystics, so far from tempering by sane interpretations the excessive expressions of various authors on the states of contemplation and extraordinary prayer, have done just the opposite; for, not content with taking these expressions literally, they have pushed them to an extreme for which there is no justification, and added things that none of the ancient writers before them had thought of . . . These views have their beginnings in the natural vanity of the human mind, which always wants to distinguish itself, and therefore unless one takes great care, infuses into everything, and even into Prayer, which is the centre of Religion, some *arrogant peculiarities*.' (Caussade 18)

Following Bossuet, Caussade identifies two abuses ('arrogant particularities') of the false mystics. Firstly, their belief that 'when one is once truly given up to God, the act always continues, provided it is not revoked, and it need be neither repeated nor renewed.' (Caussade 18) According to this interpretation of prayer, once God has touched us (like the fruit dropping from above), we permanently attain a state of perfection. A wrong reading of Roquentin's hardness (Aristotle's immortality) might lead to this fanciful ideal of hardness in *episteme* too.[446] Bossuet's true mystics, on the other hand, teach the same temporal lesson as James regarding the psychology of attention, namely that 'the act in which one contemplates God by regarding him in pure faith may last for some time, longer or shorter according to one's habitual disposition, and most of all according to the force of the grace which draws the mind and the heart to God.' (Caussade 20) This leads to the

[444] 'Doubting and non-doubting behaviour. There is the first only if there is the second.' (354)
[445] 'I must be able to add "But of course God is not a mighty fortress." I must realize that there are a thousand other images quite incompatible with this one. God is a mother, God is a king, God is an eagle hovering over her young, God is breath.' (McCabe 57)
[446] 'The idea of a super-hardness. "The geometrical lever is harder than any lever can be. It can't bend." Here you have the case of logical necessity. "Logic is a mechanism that made of an infinitely hard material. Logic cannot bend." (Well, no more it can.) This is the way we arrive at a super-something. This is the way certain superlatives come about, how they are used, e.g. the infinite.' (Wittgenstein LC 16)

second abuse we have seen in Ch.2, of neglecting the spiritual discipline that makes for conscious prayer (and thoughtful reading).[447]

That attention takes place within time, in different modes and renewed attempts, is, as noted before, crucial to our undertaking: for unless we take temporality into account, we are unaware that thinking participates in attention by preceding intuition. Lewis divides the contemplation of artworks into two processes that are in fact 'two uses of pictures'. 'After the negative effort, the positive.' (18; 19) Lewis recalls how, as a child, he had enjoyed certain illustrations in books which he would now, however, have certainly deemed bad art. Yet his liking them was not an error, it pertained to the way in which he used pictures. 'I liked Beatrix Potter's illustrations', he tells us 'at a time when the idea of humanized animals fascinated me perhaps even more than it fascinates most children; and I liked Rackham's at a time when Norse mythology was the chief interest of my life.' Both exemplify the work of the imagination – and the former particularly denotes Vico's primitive poetic perception. 'Clearly, the pictures of both artists appealed to me because of what was represented. They were substitutes.' Enjoying a picture of landscape was pleasurable because 'it represented country such as I would have like to walk through in reality.' (14-5)

And yet Lewis later realized how this fancy had distracted him from what was before his eyes: those pictures had worked as doorways to the imagination.[448] Fancy numbed his attention to how the pictures were made. 'Prolonged and careful observation of the picture itself was not necessary. It might even have hindered the subjective activity.' This is the mode of 'the many': Heidegger's They.[449] (These qualifications show that attention is clearly not a mass result of mass education.) The many enjoy things that 'would in reality please or amuse or excite . . . arouse appetite' (15-6) This mode of reading uses pictures as 'two other sorts of representational object; namely the ikon and the toy.' (17) What matters here is the imaginary projection of the self, artworks being 'a self-starter for certain imaginative and emotional activities of your own. In other words you "do things with it". You don't lay yourself open to what it, by being in its totality precisely the thing it is, can do to you.' (16-7) So the ikon, like Loyola's articulated imagery of the fragmented Christ, like a 'crucifix exists in order to direct the worshipper's thought and affections to the Passion.' (17)

Lewis, however, does not want to completely reject this form of use.[450] As with Vico, it is a starting point, and depends on what follows. But on its own, it is incomplete; it does not comprise a full notion of poetic attention. And so whatever may follow, one thing is certain: 'they are not essentially appreciations of pictures. Real appreciation demands the opposite process.' What Lewis

[447] They believe 'they are exempt from the detailed carrying out of all these interior practices, which in their system are only for beginners although absolutely commanded for all: they therefore exclude them from the state of the perfect.' (Caussade 20)
[448] 'The result, as I now see, was that I attended very inadequately to what was actually before me. It mattered intensely what the picture was "of"; hardly at all what the picture was. It acted almost as a hieroglyph.' (Lewis 15)
[449] 'All the evidence suggests to me that my own experience of pictures then was very much what that of the majority always remains.' (Lewis 15)
[450] 'If this is how the many use pictures, we must reject at once the haughty notion that their use is always and necessarily a vulgar and silly one. It may or may not be . . . To one such spectator Tintoretto's *Three Graces* may be merely an assistance in prurient imagination; he has used it as pornography. To another, it may be the starting-point for a meditation on Greek myth which, in its own right, is of value. It might conceivably, in its own different way, lead to something as good as the picture itself. This may be what happened when Keats looked at a Grecian urn.' (18)

describes as real appreciation is the equivalent of Weil's decreation: the *via negativa* of perception. To be able to see what is before us, we must first take ourselves, the 'I' and its illusions, out of the equation. 'We must begin by laying aside as completely as we can all our own preconceptions, interests and associations. We must make room for Botticelli's Mars and Venus, or Cimabue's Crucifixion, by emptying out our own.' (18-9) And now, given this work, this *lysis*, 'after the negative effort, the positive. We must use our eyes. We must look, and go on looking till we have certainly seen exactly what is there.' After the subtraction of our imagination, the use of our senses: only then do we 'see' what we see. Only then may we be impressed by *that* thing.[451] Because artworks are things, the contemplation of artworks must also be done through the senses. Whereas St. John's Dark Night consisted in the prior annihilation of the senses so that we might contemplate our *ideas*; here the opposite must occur. For what we are looking at is out here, in the world; not in here in the Garden. This requires knowing how to listen: and so contemplation requires training both in understanding discourse and in silencing it.

The differences may be summarized in saying that 'the many *use* art and the few *receive* it. The many behave in this like a man who talks when he should listen or gives when he should take. I do not mean by this that the right spectator is passive. His also is an imaginative activity; but an obedient one.' And so a sense of necessity is due to the artwork; a sense that beauty is to be contemplated.[452] But its object must be worthy of time, of our contemplative attention. In the receptive mode, if the thing is not beautiful, we turn away.[453] 'A bad picture cannot be enjoyed with that full and disciplined "reception" which the few give to a good one . . . besides being "of" something' it must also be 'a pleasing *object*.' (20) And so in religion, too, these two uses: iconoclasm deems beauty useless; the mystic uses beauty as an image.[454] That beauty can be used as an image of God relates to the ataraxic nature of contemplation: the onlooker must tranquilize his or her desire in the knowledge that beauty cannot be possessed.[455] Like a body to its soul, the notion of beauty is a composite because beauty is not a property of things, it is the coincidence of a number of things: the thing's material composition, all my prior experience with aesthetic objects but also life in general, and above all my capacity for contemplative attention.

Let us not return to my attempt to understand whether my intuition that "The Garden" is an ironic critique of *phantasia* is founded. The seventh stanza takes the poet to the Garden's very source. Here the poet divests himself of his body and allows his soul to climb up into the boughs, singing like a bird. There it stays, allowing its plumes (his writing instrument) to wave in the various aspects disclosed by the light, as it awaits 'longer flight'. This intimation of death is crucial because it introduces temporality in the poem, offsetting the eternality of the mono-colored Garden. Temporality is especially signaled in the eight octave, when the tense finally changes to the past,

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[451] 'We sit down before the picture in order to have something done to us, not that we may do things with it. The first demand any work of art makes upon is surrender. Look. Listen. Receive. Get yourself out of the way.' (19)
[452] 'The beautiful is that which we can contemplate. A statue, a picture which we can gaze at for hours. The beautiful is something on which we can fix our attention.' (GG 149)
[453] 'He seems passive at first because he is making sure of his orders. If, when they have been fully grasped, he decides that they are not worth obeying – in other words, that this is a bad picture - he turns away altogether.' (19-20)
[454] 'Gregorian music. When the same things are sung for hours each day and every day, whatever falls even slightly short of supreme excellence becomes unendurable and is eliminated. The Greeks looked at their temples. We can endure the statues in the Luxembourg because we do not look at them.' (GG 149)
[455] Unlike the edible rain of fruit in the Garden, beauty is 'a fruit which we look at without trying to seize it.' (GG 150)

and we thus exit, after the song has been sung, the remembrance of the Garden. The Garden was a fable - happy while the solitary meandering lasted; but this 'place so pure and sweet' seems wrong somehow: the next verse rhymes albeit agrammatically: for after such a place as the delightful Garden, 'What other help could yet be meet!' And again an exclamation mark questions – calling us to look at an infinitive which should have been a past participle. And thus an eternal time writes itself over a finished tense; and so the necessity of rhyme overwrites the necessity of the regular world. There is a call for help from within the Garden, since 'help' also applies to the Garden ('*other* help' implying this and that). The eternal present of the Garden can only hold the solitary wanderer and his imagination ('Two paradises 'twere in one/ To live in paradise alone.'). So after all there were two gardens in one: the imagination and the poem. We can use the first, can only contemplate the other.

I see two claims in this duplicity; one metaphysical, the other quite down-to-earth. Firstly, 'here at the fountain's sliding foot', on the slope of the mountain of attention, 'or at some fruit tree's mossy root' from where the apple of language and knowledge might grow (by counterpointing a single thought with song, a mono-color with 'various light', the sap that is the poet's ink with the various aspects of names), the poet expressly indicates that within Oneness there is Duality (Ch.4).[456] If there is a sense to transcendent immortality (the Garden of Eve where God is), then it is composite, it stems from the particulars of reality. It stems from this world, which the gods desire. The second sense follows from this attitude: as another help, singing (or writing) in the Garden helps one cope with the world; but the Garden is not the world, and must not be confused with it. To be mortal is to be with a mate, with others; and so the irony goes in the sense that fortunately, this is the world we live in. In more than one sense, a world of creation.

The last stanza masterfully weaves a series of internal references of the poem together: the poem itself is the weaving of a garland. The 'skillful gardener' thus refers to both creators: God, the maker of life, and the poet, who 'drew of flow'rs and herbs this dial new'. The gardener is skillful because from-and-with words he 'draws' in both senses: he draws the sap from the plants and draws a dial new. God created time and death, the poet a new way of keeping time: meaning in meter: a new way of thinking with words. God's time extends everywhere, 'above the milder sun', but it is the poet's fables that make the Garden keep time through its myths, which can be read in the skies, as they 'through a fragrant zodiac run.' The gods chase our world in circles, as they pursue the mortal nymphs. Their interest is in our world, they describe it by landscaping it as still statues: the trees in the Garden. Mythology is the initial accounting of the world, as it revolves in its manifold aspects. Yet time both keeps and kills us, as mortal necessity dictates. So both poet and the industrious bee ('we') partake in being such beings. The bee, however, computes, and the poet draws in time. But these senses are not opposed: 'well' is repeated at the time 'we' is announced. The gardener also computes, in his own way. And then the following couple of lines repeat the delightful irony that qualifies the Garden as 'sweet and wholesome', upon reversing (and calling out) 'herbs and flow'rs!'. There is a mirror image drawn (expressly 'well drawn', what is more) between the top and the bottom of the stanza. But since all we have in The Garden are

[456] Returning to the poet's resolute standing in the original draft, his venture is Being: 'We ask: what is there still to be dared that would be still more daring than Life . . . must be such that concerns every being inasmuch as it is a being. Of such a kind is Being, and in this way, that it is not one particular kind among others, but the mode of all beings as such.' (WPF 131)

words (since here there is no distinction between reality and words, between ring and 'ring'), what is mirrored *both is and is not*. And this (as we shall further see in Ch.4) is the logical form of irony.

What is inscribed in this reversal, moreover, is something we 'reckon' time with. The poet too toils, pondering on how to best craft meanings. It is truly a wondrous clock Marvell has pieced together. If we start again from the top, it winds us round, makes is delve further into his art. Once we have been told that the poet has made a dial, we can then repose on the third stanza and note how, this time, symmetry indicates a difference in rhyme, and thus meaning. Influenced by the context of engraving in trees, we are led to read 'wound' as in the sense of cutting; and yet, if we read aloud and heed to sound, we notice that what is to be expected is a rhyme with 'found' – making us go back and reread 'wound' as the past tense of 'to wind' (as of a clock, *and* as in being dressed or coiled by an engulfing garland of flowers and trees). We can find this here if we pay attention to the necessity the poem has taught us through its standard repetition by creating expectations in us: and we thereby detect slight deviations from such metricity. Clues are dropped in between the gaps: perception discerns something strange, but it is thinking - that is, a looking at the thing that takes time and wills to receive it: attention - that discovers its sense, relating a given meaning within the whole that is the poem. For we take as a rule that poems make sense, since that is what we expect when someone wants to tell us something. Obviously, if someone wrote it, it is for someone else to read.

And so this dial we readers wind is like the bark of fair trees that we might find ourselves in, like a new vest for a soul that casts the body aside and seeps into boughs. The poet becomes like a tree, or more precisely like the name of trees, in his formal imitation of God's creation. Whether the plant this gardener grows is sacred needs to be assessed within the 'well' of the 'we', needs to considered within the tradition of other plants, for only among them will it grow. The role of the poet, like the bird, is to sing life, to be the sap of trees, before he dies. That is his role, to learn to listen to the being of life, *esse*, in its manifold manifestations; the readers' is to learn to listen to these accounts. Then we might hear a song whose provenance we recognize as being that same source of wonder which is reckoning our time in this world. Mysticism does not come from the sky.[457]

## Understanding a poem

To conclude this topic on the imagination, I would like to quickly discuss some of the problems implied that ensue from what it is to understand a poem. Since poems are a strange

[457] It is through the duality of experience and the understanding that metaphysics may 'be connected with a mystical state.' (Murdoch 79) To illustrate, Murdoch quotes Schopenhauer as an influence in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: 'I therefore say that the solution of the riddle of the world must proceed from the understanding of the world itself; that thus the task of metaphysics is not to pass beyond the experience in which the world exists, but to understand it thoroughly because inner and outer experience is at any rate the principle source of all knowledge; that therefore the solution of the riddle of the world is only possible through the proper connection of outer with inner experience effected at the right point, and the combination thereby produced of these two very different sources of knowledge. Yet this solution is only possible within certain limits which are inseparable from our finite nature, so that we attain to a right understanding of the world itself without reaching a final explanation of its existence.' (Schopenhauer 20)

mixture of sense and nonsense, and rely heavily on personal experience, then there is a problem as to how we know - or can *agree*[458] - that we are speaking of the same thing when we discuss such an object. Since, as I have just noted, what we discuss are words on paper and meanings in our imagination, then, in talking of interpretations, are we not just imagining what the poem is about? Again, this pertains to attention. When teachers are unsure whether a student has been paying attention, the usual method is to ask for an account of what has been said. This may involve the repetition of certain words, but not the repetition of all the words. What is expected, as a verification of not just hearing but listening, i.e. of understanding, is not recitation but interpretation. For if the student has learned, she will be able to provide a satisfactory account of the idea conveyed. The account should not be the same, but an expression of the student's own understanding. I would like to give two quick examples of what might count as 'understanding a poem'.

To show why we like a poem, we might just repeat (i.e. imitate) some verses. But to show we understand it, we must paraphrase.[459] To talk of the meaning of a poem is in a way like talking of what a person is like. In trying to describe someone, we will not make an exact copy, but an imitation that is an interpretation. 'If I make a gesture, and you are good imitators, these gestures will have to be similar, but different; the shape of the fingers, etc., is different. The criterion for its being this gesture will be the clicking of it in you.' We have different physiognomies, make kinetically different gestures: Wittgenstein's problem is how we recognize paraphrase. 'Each one makes a gesture immediately and says: "That's the one." . . . This isn't coordinates; it is something else: imitating the person.' (Wittgenstein LC 39) This click is, again, the phenomenon of 'lighting up': the understanding that comes of itself because it recognizes the being shown. The description does not 'mean' the being - it is *another form* of the being: an account.

What is being described is hard to say because we see person A imitating B, meaning we 'see' B 'in' A. If the question is 'What is being imitated?' this seems to beg for a thing, so perhaps we offer the noun 'Well, the person's spirit.'[460] When Nussbaum describes musical improvisation she notes that we 'can also say that as the classical player ascends the scale of musical excellence, so to speak, becoming not simply a rote reader of the score but an active thinking interpreter who freshly realizes the work at each performance, she resembles more and more the jazz musician in the nature of her attention.' (Nussbaum LK 94) And yet there is a major difference: the classical interpreter never wholly leaves the score, the notation is fixed. The jazz player, on the other hand, has no structure holding her back. The jazz improv musician has her attention directed at her partners, and reacts in that 'space', to those phenomena. It is mostly an attention directed at others and the sounds of others. The form is open, shifting, can vary at the curve of each decision. In the case of the interpreter, however, there is a crucial difference: a fixed, linguistic object. What goes on in this case is not as much, so to speak, an invention as it is a discovery. This is because in each case the possibilities of self-expression are different; for self-expression to logically exist in the first place, the interpreter must have read and practiced the score beforehand. This case is like prayer:

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[458] 'Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgement.' (Wittgenstein, On Certainty 378)

[459] 'You say in this case that it is indescribable. But this does not mean that you may not one day say that something is a *description*. You may one day find the *word* or you find a verse that fits it. "It is as though he said: '. . .'," and you find a verse. And now perhaps you say: "And now I understand it."' (Wittgenstein LC 37)

[460] 'The mistake seems to me in the idea of description.' (37)

signs in a classical score are not ambiguous (as they are in poems), and so training has moved him beyond doubt regarding the notation. What the interpreter brings to the occasion is his attitude toward the written piece. If he is successful in creating his own interpretation, if the music does not fail as music and moves *us*, keeps its intended impact, then we might possibly say the interpreter has captured 'the spirit of the piece'. Because (just as an eye without sight is not an 'eye'): its essence is not what is written down, but what is missing. Successfully supplying what is not there is what being inspired - what poetic attention means. And so in this case *my anima* is not projected onto other beings but onto language. In reading poems I animate language - and so can 'see' those specific kind of beings that are words.

# Chapter 4 – Attention to Words

## Writing and the Myth of Theuth

When Derrida recounts Socrates' narration of the myth of Theuth in the *Phaedrus*, what is at stake is 'a question about the status of writing' (Plato's Pharmacy 68) and its relation to self-knowledge. Theuth invents writing and presents it as a gift to Thamus, the king of Egypt, telling him that 'writing is a recipe *(pharmakon)* for both memory and wisdom.' (274c-e). But the King is wary of his invention and rejects it. Derrida traces this belittlement to 'the permanence of a Platonic schema that assigns the origin and power of speech, precisely of *logos*, to the paternal position', in short logocentrism position that 'sets up the whole of Western metaphysics.' (76) For God the King has no need nor knows how to write: writing is a supplement to the full presence of living speech. In this scheme, of the presence of speech versus the absence of writing, 'the origin of *logos* is *its father* . . . *Logos* is a son . . . that would be destroyed in his very *presence* without the present *attendance* of his father . . . who speaks for him and answers for him.' (77) *Logos* only comes alive in the present speech of present time, in the art of rhetoric which 'infallibly conforms to the necessities of the situation at hand', and so as 'a *living* being . . . a *zoon* [which] is born, grows, belongs to *phusis'* (79), *logos* adapts.

Writing, however, is not a living being but a thing: markings on paper left by an absent figure and waiting to be filled. This difference pertains to the 'general problematic of the relations between mythemes and the philosophemes that lie at the origin of western *logos'*, and thus, as a whole, 'of History – which has been produced in its entirety in the *philosophical* difference between *mythos* and *logos*, blindly sinking down into that difference as the natural obviousness of its own element.' (86) Logocentrism is based on this either/or opposition between the living thinking that is present in speech and the corpse of writing, which is a mere substitute, a spokesperson, for the godly father - as Thoth replaces Ra.[461] As his representative, Thoth 'is the executor, through language' of the god's 'creative project', the words that execute the thoughts and intentions of the originating father. (88) This is the dualism between word and action, or even word and truth: between the copy and the genus, the original (simultaneously meaning temporally prior, causal and new). In the *Phaedrus*, the father-god is Ammon, a proper name which means 'the hidden. Once again we encounter here a hidden sun, the father of all things, letting himself be represented by speech.' (87) But the point is also that if the sun, Stevens' 'primary noon' came out in full blast, it would burn one's eyes to cinders: and so myth comes to offer the possibility of *methexis*. Myth is the manageable *eidos* of *logos* the father. So the logothete is 'like his Greek counterpart, Hermes, whom Plato moreover never mentions, [who] occupies the role of messenger-god, of clever intermediary, ingenious and subtle enough to steal, and always to steal away. The signifier-god.' (88) This is the role Socrates plays in the *Charmides*.

[461] Thoth is Theuth's equivalent in Egyptian mythology. 'The Majesty of this god said to Thoth: ". . . *You are in my place, my replacement, and you will be called thus: Thoth, he who replaces* Ra.' (89)

## The Charmides

### *The Cure: Sophrosyne & Pharmakon*

In the *Charmides*, Socrates, upon returning from a fierce battle at Potidae, meets Critias in a gymnasium[462] and inquires him about the current state of things at home. His concern is to become reacquainted, after his sojourning with the army, with two things: philosophy and the youth, namely if there is any one among them 'remarkable for wisdom and beauty, or both' (153d). And there is, at least for beauty. Charmides, Critias' notoriously beautiful and young cousin enters the gymnasium, and all eyes, including Socrates', turn to him in passionate awe.[463] So striking is the impact, like that of a beautiful tune, that Socrates breaks out to address the reader in confession,[464] before inquiring Critias whether the boy's inner beauty was as remarkable as his outer: 'before we see his body, should we not ask him to strip and show us his soul? He is surely just of an age at which he will like to talk.' (154d) Critias assures Socrates that Charmides is of a beautiful and noble soul: i.e. that he possesses the virtue of *sophrosyne*.[465] Socrates, by now stimulated beyond mere curiosity, asks Critias to bring him over.[466] Since Charmides has been suffering from headaches, Critias asks the attendant to summon him by telling him 'to come and see a physician about the illness of which he spoke to me'. He then calls upon Socrates' persuasive skills: 'Now why should you not make him believe that you know a cure for the headache?' (155b).

It is under this guise of therapy that the dialogue is established. Socrates accedes to his role as physician and tells Charmides he knows of an effective cure, which he has learned from a physician of Zalmoxis, the Thracian king.[467] This cure has two components: 'a kind of leaf [*pharmakon*], which required to be accompanied by a charm [*epode*], and if a person would repeat the charm at the same time that he used the cure, he would be made whole, but that without the charm the leaf would be of no avail.' (155e) He goes on to state what the charm consists of: 'these charms are fair words, and by them temperance [*sophrosyne*] is implanted in the soul, and where temperance comes and stays, there health is speedily imparted.' (157a) If *sophrosyne*, which is a virtue, is necessary to impart physical health, then it follows that moral health is a prerequisite to physical health: 'you [ought not] to attempt to cure the body without the soul . . . this . . . is the reason why the cure of many diseases is unknown to the physicians of Hellas, because they disregard the

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462 It was not by chance that a gymnasium was chosen for the setting of the *Charmides*. In a later, less Socratic than Platonic dialogue, Glaucon says that 'the devotees of unmitigated gymnastics turn out more brutal than they should be and those of music softer than is good for them.' (Plato Republic III 410d), to which Socrates replies, 'two arts which I would say some god gave to mankind . . . for the service of the high-spirited principle and the love of knowledge in them – not for the soul and the body except incidentally, but for the harmonious adjustment of these two principles by the proper degree of tension and relaxation of each'. (411e)

463 'All the company seemed to be enamored of him. Amazement and confusion reigned when he entered . . . all of them . . . turned and looked at him, as if he had been a statue.' (154c)

464 '. . . my friend . . . when I saw him, I confess that I was quite astonished at his beauty and stature.' (154c)

465 Cf. Hamilton (translator), the *Charmides* poses a particular challenge: the impossibility of translating *sophrosyne* into a single word within the English language. The choice was to use 'temperance' and 'wisdom' as stand-ins. Hamilton says this impossibility derives from the simple fact that 'we have lost the conception of [this quality]', which to the Greeks was, nonetheless, 'an ideal second to none in importance'. (Plato 99)

466 The erotic tension is quite evident. 'For even if he were younger than he is, there could be no impropriety in his talking to us before you, his guardian and cousin.' (155a)

467 This is surely a reference to the Orphic cult: 'the Thracian Orpheus [is] a master shaman of shamans.' (Laín 43)

whole, which ought to be studied also, for the part can never be well unless the whole is well.' (156e) The Thracian cure is evidently holistic, not simply Hippocratic[468] or Cartesian. Yet there is a small conundrum: we know the *epode* consists of words, yet what the *pharmakon* does we are never told, all we know is that they are to be imparted together.

To ascertain whether the boy needs this cure, Socrates asks Charmides to define what *sophrosyne* is, the assumption being that if he understands the word he will possess this wisdom. Yet the boy has not given universals (composite abstract ideas) much thought, and in his interpretations delivers only banal, socially-accepted answers. Upon his third try, Charmides says 'I heard from someone, "'Temperance is doing our own business.'" Socrates is initially angry that Charmides has not come up with something of his own, but agrees to Charmides' vindication and says that indeed 'the point is not who said the words, but whether they are true or not.' (161c). Socrates here hints at the importance of irony in the dialogue. And he now turns to Critias, the sophist, to try to discover the meaning of *sophrosyne*. Yet this turn is staged. Critias becomes angry at Charmides' saying he 'should not wonder if the man himself who used this phrase did not understand what he meant.' (162b). Yet Socrates had already intuited that Critias had been the author behind Charmides' final definition, and so used bait: 'Was he a fool who told you?' (162a) Having correctly ascertained Critias' pride, he mocks him under an appearance of praise: 'Why, at his age . . . he can hardly be expected to understand, but you, who are older, and have studied, may well be assumed to know the meaning of [the words].' (162e) The figure of Socrates is itself a riddle; but unlike a riddle, no one can tell us the answer, for Socrates himself is a supplement. Under the guise of speech, Socrates is written, the representative of Plato. This particular dialogue, however, is key in the history of the familial relation that initiates Western philosophy.[469] It has been rather overlooked, probably due to its perplexing (and yet fruitful) ambiguity.[470] This very element suggests that one is supposed to read this philosophical piece as a poem of sorts, given the heavy use of equivocalness.[471]

## The Mask of Irony

Although in the dialogue Socrates plays the strangest puns and twists of words, which at first are extremely confusing and then reveal cunning persuasion and a quick-eyed intuition into the character of the interlocutors, allowing him to place the right word at the right time – in spite of all this, which occurs in a lively and seemingly improvised manner, like speech… Socrates never

[468] Laín summarizes the role of the therapeutic word in Hippocratic medicine as 'the irrepressible tendency . . . to see and understand the twofold nature of man somatically and indeed *only* somatically.'(169)
[469] Schmid highlights an important trait of this 'inauspicious and often neglected' dialogue, that 'it is unquestionably Socratic – it reflects an intellectual world that is more open than the intellectual world of the middle Platonic dialogues seems to be . . . a kind of microcosm of Socratic philosophy.' (Schmid vii-viii)
[470] 'The *Charmides* shows what a stern discipline of thought Plato imposed upon himself in order to work out to the full the implications of Socrates' teachings and to turn himself into a real philosopher . . . Plato examines logical questions and interweaves with his main argument a careful scrutiny of certain verbal ambiguities. This may seem tiresome in some ways, and following Plato's argument is an arduous task; but the sifting out of meanings and the clarification of ambiguities is necessary if philosophy is to make progress'. (Tuckey 106)
[471] 'What creates the problem is the Socrates of Plato's earlier dialogues – complicated, devious, cunning and not averse to playing pranks on his interlocutors upon occasion.' (Vlastos IM 133)

says what he means. As with a poem, what Socrates' words mean is never obvious because he is - even in this veritable semblance of speech – never present. Like myth, Socrates is the face of what we cannot otherwise see: *logos*.[472] That, as in John 1:1, 'in *arche* was *logos'* can only be said, *shown*, through *mythos*. This condition is what justifies the language of III.5 (whose object is *logos*). Thus *mythos* becomes an equiprimordial - and thus ambiguous, whilst *necessary* - meaning of *logos*.[473] Allegory is the essential simulacrum for uttering what cannot be said.

Critias, in an attempt to rescue his cited definition (and his reputation) makes a distinction between 'doing' and 'making' (or 'working'), which he maintains is the idea his definition truly refers to. To support this distinction he quotes Hesiod, 'who says that "work is no disgrace"' - and proceeds to explain that the produce of 'things nobly and usefully made he called works . . . And [Hesiod] must be supposed to have deemed only such things to be man's proper business . . . and in that sense Hesiod, and any other wise man, may be reasonably supposed to call him wise who does his own work.' (163c) Then he produces another definition of *sophrosyne*: a simple, although redundant, formula: 'For temperance I define in plain words to be the doing of good actions.' (163e) And yet when Socrates confuses and prods him for further explanation,[474] it turns out that the 'things nobly and usefully made' Critias deems good are opposed to *hoi poloi* craft.[475] Although his conclusion appeared innocent indeed, his argumentation – by revealing how he is applying his words – discloses a character that is aristocratic in name but not in deed.[476]

So the fact that Critias concludes with a tautological definition (implicitly taking a virtue to be a good) gives Socrates an indication that he is to keep on testing him, and therefore asks that if a wise man acts wisely and is good, then how come a physician, for example, exercising his duty (and as such 'acting wisely') cannot predict the outcome of his actions and may sometimes cause harm? (164c) As we shall see, Socrates is talking of himself, the *pharmakon*; but Critias, lost among his words and oblivious to the attitudes behind them, is not aware of this. 'That is not the way of pursuing the inquiry . . . for wisdom is not like the other sciences,' he says. (165e) Is Socrates being a bad inquirer, as he himself states at the end, when the dialogue ends in *aporia*? Quite on the contrary - he is the most skillful of inquirers: the all too conscious philosopher is derailing the discussion on purpose, using words to confuse the interlocutors.[477] He dissimulates for the same reason he has hid his lust for Charmides: to preserve his mask as a maieutic teacher. As Hadot puts

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[472] As with *esse* and allegory: 'Now, about this father, this capital, this origin of value and of appearing beings, it is not possible to speak simply or directly. First of all because it is no more possible to look them in the face than to start at the sun.' (Derrida 82)

[473] 'And since an account or reason cannot be given of what *logos* (account or reason: *ratio*) is accountable or owing *to*', thus *logos* is 'that which *protects us from the sun*.' (Derrida 83)

[474] 'No sooner had you opened your mouth than I pretty well knew that you would call that which is proper to a man, and that which is his own, good, and that the makings of the good you would call doings, for I am no stranger to the endless distinctions which Prodicus draws about names. Now I have no objection to your giving names any signification which you please, if you will only tell me to what you apply them.' (163d) And yet what Socrates demands of Critias, he himself never does.

[475] 'Now do you imagine that if [Hesiod] had meant by working and doing such things as you were describing, he would have said that there was no disgrace in them – for example, in the manufacture of shoes, or in selling dried fish, or sitting for hire in a house of ill fame [prostitution]? That, Socrates, is not to be supposed'. (163b)

[476] As Schmid correctly observes, 'The lumping of shoemaking with prostitution indicates Critias' disdain for common labor – just the opposite value to the one Hesiod extolled. In this regard, Critias betrays himself as precisely the kind of arrogant aristocrat Hesiod characterizes'. (34)

[477] 'Socrates, whose one claim was that he knew nothing . . . is found continually putting to confusion those who considered themselves wise.' (Tuckey 66)

it, 'The Socratic mask is the mask of irony.' (152) As Vlastos explains, the word 'irony' had two meanings in ancient Greek: a derisory use as in Plato's accusation of the *eirones*, where irony denotes deception; but also one of mockery, in fact much like our current use of 'pretend'. A con man, for example, 'pretends' (and deceives), but children also 'pretend' 'that their colored chips are money ("pretend-money", they call them)'. (IM 27) This second meaning, akin to a logic of play, does not (logically cannot) imply deception. And this, Vlastos asserts, is the nature of the much-misunderstood Socratic irony.

Some centuries after Plato, Quintilian is to define irony quite simply as the figure of speech where 'something contrary to what is said is to be understood.'[478] Yet this is still what Vlastos calls 'simple irony': where what is said is not what is meant and as such is a *false* statement. This, however, is not to be confused with a lie, for the *intention* is not deceit, but mockery, play. Socrates, however, managed to take irony a step further, and invented something Vlastos regards as 'a new form of irony, unprecedented in Greek literature to my knowledge, which is peculiarly Socratic' and almost[479] exclusively present in the Platonic dialogues. This is 'complex irony', where 'what is said both is and isn't what is meant: its surface content is meant to be true in one sense, false in another.'[480] (31) And here we have the key to why ambiguity is at the center of the *Charmides*, a discourse which practically lives off irony. If we read back (as we nearly always have to do with poems that are ironically complex, i.e. those which typically include philosophical thinking), we can see Socrates letting Charmides (and us) know of his method of complex irony at the end of the rebuttal of the very first definition.[481] Incidentally, this is where Charmides says 'temperance is a kind of *quietness*.' (159a, my italics)

Here we understand that he was not refuting Charmides because what he said was false (it was not) but because it did not go deep enough (was not semantically dense and thus not objective enough, could not be applied to enough cases) and merely floated on the social surface of traditional norms.[482] Upon the second definition, Socrates refutes Charmides' definition of *sophrosyne* as shame and modesty by quoting Homer's 'Modesty is not good for a needy man.' (161a) McCoy defends that through the use of this citation 'Socrates wants Charmides to see himself in the role of Odysseus, that is, in the role of the person who is in need.' (146) Socrates is not being sophistic, he is pointing out that there is another side to each of these answers and that one must think for oneself. He is trying to teach Charmides (without directly telling him so) what it

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[478] *'Contrarium ei quod dicitur intelligendum est'* (*in Institutio Oratorica* 9.22.44). Vlastos surmises that the impact of *Socratic* irony was so great that the word stabilized in Latin in this second, guileless, meaning on account of Socrates. 'He changes the word not by theorizing about it but by creating something new for it to mean: a new form of life realized in himself which was the very incarnation of "*eironeia*" in that second of its contemporary uses'. (IM 29)

[479] Vlastos gives his first, admittedly weaker - example through Xenophon.

[480] A related terminological distinction is that between the 'actual' and the 'intended' sense, as in the example Vlastos gives later on in the same book, that 'Oedipus desires to marry Iocasta; Iocasta happens to be his mother; ergo, he desires to marry his mother)'. If someone says "Oh my God! Oedipus wants to marry his mother!" - and A says 'Yes, he does' and B says 'No, he doesn't', then 'both statements can be true because A's refers to the "actual" and B's to the "intended" object of Oedipus' desire'. Oedipus will not get what he wants in marrying Iocasta under the description of 'his mother', but only under the description of "that enchanting woman" or some other description that expresses how he sees and desires her. (IM 151)

[481] 'And of two things one is true – either never, or very seldom, do the quiet actions in life appear to be better than the quick and energetic ones, or supposing at the best that of the nobler actions there are as many quiet as quick and vehement; still, even if we grant this, temperance will not be acting quietly any more than acting quickly'. (160c)

[482] Relating this 'behavioral definition' to the hubristic dramatic setting of the prologue, Schmid says that 'it is no mere accident, then, that the inquiry begins by focusing on orderly behavior. It is there that moderation appears, and it is in relation to the outward norms of the virtue that it is learned.' (23)

is to read ambiguous words, to pay attention to meanings. When Socrates classified the third definition as a riddle we saw how he intentionally added 'Was he a fool who told you?' (leading Charmides to mock Critias and draw his character out into the open). But simultaneously, Socrates is surreptitiously indicating how the spokesperson of this mock-riddle, Socrates himself, the supposed oracle, is talking nonsense. Written, Plato's irony means Socrates eschews the seriousness of language, of the relation between myth and self-knowledge;[483] so that *he* can freely use words and initiate a process of questioning self-knowledge.[484] Socrates' words are not (initially, at least) spoken for their truth value, but for their effect on people. And this is being a sort of serious - about how one plays, in writing.[485]

I would like to look at a different kind of example of complex irony now. Jim O'Rourke's song "Halfway to a Threeway"[vii] causes the strangest impression: the music is delicately beautiful, and yet the lyrics, which tell the story of a geriatric nurse who intends to have a threesome that night by raping and killing a couple of incapacitated old ladies, are intentionally gruesome. Knowing the author's tendency for sarcasm, as well as for writing lyrics about song genres themselves,[486] I interpret that he (more than perhaps singing about an incapacitated love relation (which he might also be doing)) intends to drive a wedge between the duplicitous relation - conventionally tranquil and *wholesome* – that typically holds a song together. For usually the music and the words go together; usually the music serves to convey, to supplement and add force to the same mood as is intended in lyrics. Here, however, the song conveys both beautifully soothing and grimly disturbing. And this is due not to the music, but to the words.

Music can be parodic but not ironic. Irony only pertains to words, and namely to self-reflexive thought.[487] Music conveys moods, power, attitudes: as aforementioned, it acts like a drug: it is *pharmakon* proper. The primitive, Orphic *epode* (as we saw in Ch.1 with Laín) initially bundled music and words together (it was *singing*); whereas, *with the birth of philosophy*, these became separate and respectively condensed into Nietzsche's classic distinction of the Dyonisian and the Apollinian.[488] Yet when *pharmakon* pertains to words instead of music, it denotes not the purely formal force of music (power), but duplicity. Within a 'poetic word' there are *more words*. If we

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[483] 'Interestingly,' in the *Phaedrus*, 'Socrates' first words . . . had concerned "not bothering about" mythologemes (229c-230a). Not in order to reject them absolutely, but, on the one hand, not bothering them, leaving them alone, making room for them, in order to free them from the heavy serious naïveté of the scientific "rationalists," and on the other, not bothering *with* them, in order to free *oneself* for the relation with oneself and the pursuit of self-knowledge.' (Derrida 67-8)

[484] 'Thus Socrates begins by sending myths off; and then, twice stopped before the question of writing, he invents two of them . . . in the name of . . . truth in the knowledge of the self.' (Derrida 69)

[485] 'Only a blind or grossly insensitive reading could indeed have spread the rumor that Plato was *simply* condemning the writer's activity. Nothing here is of a single piece and the *Phaedrus* also, in its own writing, plays at saving writing – which also means causing it to be lost – as the best, the noblest game.' (Derrida 67)

[486] Hear, for example, the hilariously mordant "Blues Subtitled No Sense Of Wonder" from his prior band, Gastr del Sol, in the album "Camoufleur" (1998), which takes a hack at the complacent habit within the blues genre of writing mindless lyrics for numb songs. It begins, 'Most blues are subtitled either no sense of wonder/ Or no sense of scale/ For example: I was sleeping/ subtitled "I have no idea how long"', etc.

[487] 'Irony certainly could not have begun until the period of reflection, because it is fashioned of falsehood by dint of a reflection which wears the mask of truth.' (Vico 131)

[488] And so in O'Rourke's song, there is not only a clash between these two elements - but also between the *mythemes* which we are to take allegorically, at face value, and the *philosophemes* we must reckon with; as well as between the unhinged play of meanings and their ethical repercussions, were they to be carried out.

return to Lewis' theory of the use of pictures, we can now see that his examples were lacking for our stated purposes, since it did not include words - especially ambiguous words, which is how words are used in poetry. At these, we cannot just look; and so there is not simply a subtractive effort of our attention followed by a looking at a simple thing: for these things (*poetic* words, words as *used in poems*) are for the most part *not* simple. They are like duck-rabbits. And so we have added a posterior step to Lewis' theory; for what he has said was correct even for words - we do indeed have to look, for understanding poetic irony requires close and repeated inspection of the particular articulations of particular words. Understanding irony is grasping a tone. As in a tone of voice, there is meaning implied in the attitude.[489] The problem is that written words bear no sound (no singing); and that makes us work (think) that much harder.

Returning to the *Charmides*, it is as if Socrates had two facets - his (confessedly) manipulative (and true) face, covered by an ironic veil of ignorance. But above all this is a pedagogical method – one that requires Socrates' intentions disappear from center stage. The beauty of it is that he places his interlocutors under the limelight without their noticing, for supposedly it is Socrates the wise who is instructing them in his wisdom. 'Socrates splits himself in two, so that there are two Socrates: the Socrates who knows in advance how the discussion is going to end, and the Socrates who travels the entire dialectical path along with his interlocutor.' (Hadot 153) Socrates knows the discussion will remain undecided after he has rebutted the interlocutor's wrong or insufficiently accurate answers. A typical stratagem of his is precisely that of the skeptic, of seeking *isostheneia* by finding contradictory statements that will not allow definitions to settle. And so duplicity reigns. This is a victory of sorts, by default, since at least the interlocutors' definitions are not approved as true. But it just serves to prove that more than about definitions the *Charmides* is about reading meanings. More than to flunk definitions, Socrates is there to point out that, in the way the interlocutors are reading them, their definitions are simply not comprehensive enough. Or else, that they are vainly insincere or worse (like O'Rourke's nurse), unremorseful and routinely set in their evil ways.

## The Elenchus

> 'Socratic elenchus is a search for moral truth by question-and-answer adversary argument in which a thesis is debated only if asserted as the answerer's own belief and is regarded as refuted only if its negation is deduced from his own beliefs.' (Vlastos SS 4)

Socrates has a method, specific to the earlier dialogues, which he never explicitly refers to: the elenchus. In a nutshell, it is a search to ascertain the truth of an interlocutor's moral belief. But there are also a series of important conditions. You should refrain from being verbose, give 'direct, unevasive answers' and most importantly you must always 'say what you believe' (7). This also means that hypothetical premises – 'legitimate not only in disputation, but even in the most

[489] 'The *tone* of a poem indicates the speaker's attitude toward his subject and toward his audience, and sometimes toward himself . . . To sum up: in one sense, the tone is an indication of the meaning of the poem.' (Brooks 112; 115)

stringent of all forms of argument as yet discovered in Greece: mathematical proof' - are out of the question. (8) Vlastos suggests the following motive for this ban on iffy, unasserted premises: 'one must say what one believes, even if it will lose one the debate', thereby testing honesty in argument, 'a pledge that what they say is what they mean'. (8-9)

And yet Socrates follows none, nor gives his interlocutors prior notice of the rules to his game. However, he is logically excused from these rules (under which he investigates others) because he never asserts but only questions. And notwithstanding, he has a principle of committed seriousness to keeping the elenchus on the track, a principle which stands prior to any ironic playfulness.[490] Here we find the reason for Socrates' outburst at Charmides upon the third definition: he was merely telling him to play within the rules.[491] His sincere and relentless search for moral truth is bound to the verification of the distance between words and intentions. Socrates checks for citatory distance. Stoically, he ultimately does not care for words save they be backed by moral character. So he will resort to pretty much any rhetorical means provided they serve his purposes of moral disclosure. What Socrates wants is to show people for what they are. (Poems too can do this, but unintentionally, for writing bears none. We do this to ourselves by not understanding meanings. That is what we do – trying to find ourselves - when we are lost.)

The elenchus is not an incursion in persuasion – it is an existential search for the moral truth of an individual's beliefs. Functioning like a poem, Socrates makes his friends lose themselves in words so they may untangle themselves.[492] 'Thus the elenchus has a double objective: to discover how every human being ought to live and to test that single human being who is doing the answering – to find out if he is living as one ought to live.' This individual dimension is, 'a challenge to his fellows to change their life' (Vlastos SS 9), in a word, 'therapeutic' (10). In the elenchus, the interlocutors' beliefs are forced to surface by Socrates' queries. He inverts the typical educational picture and masterfully places the unwitting disciple in the role of master, while Socrates speaks indirectly and ironically, not with theories (for at least in this dialogue he has none) but by prompting his interlocutors to voice their own beliefs (which he brings out into the open and pushes into doubt). Given this constant placing into question, the elenchus lays bare the very act of thinking philosophically. The stage could very well be the mind of the type-cast philosopher, skeptically testing the consistency of his own beliefs and theories as he drops shadows of doubt upon them. Thus *isostheneia* is a valuable method: it is the duplicitous mode of thinking of the *pharmakon*.

In our discussion of "The Garden", I suggested the downside of *isostheneia:* that having it as an *end*, as one's motto in life was irresponsible and unreasonable – if skepticism is taken to its extreme, and all things are just as equally valuable and there are no distinctions to be made, then

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[490] Vlastos describes Socrates' brand of irony as being 'as innocent of intentional deceit as is a child's feigning that the play chips are money, as free from shamming as are honest games, though, unlike games, serious in its mockery (*cum gravitate salsum*), dead earnest in its playfulness (*severe ludens*) (1991 29)

[491] 'You wicked boy! This is what Critias, or some other philosopher has told you.' (161b) Critias immediately denies this (which we know to be true), further stepping into character. If we compare Socrates' rebuke ('Wicked!' is quickly followed by 'No matter at all') with Critias' in 162c, we get a further glimpse of tyrannical violence compared to fair elicitation.

[492] Nicias says, 'Anyone who is close to Socrates and enters into conversation with him is liable to be drawn into an argument, and whatever subject he may start, he will be continually carried round and round by him, until at last he finds that he has to give an account both of his present and past life, and when he is once entangled, Socrates will not let him go until he has completely and thoroughly sifted him.' (Laches 187e)

language would have no common ground. And if we doubt the basis of everything, not only talking among ourselves be impossible, but my own memories could not be differentiated from free-floating imagination. Certainty is not a matter of knowing facts, but of not doubting the world is real.[493] But this is not the case of Socrates:[494] he is intent on resorting to *isostheneia* as a means, a method for the (moral) disclosure of beings. But since his interlocutors are sophists, and *their* words are not citationally distant *on account of serious playfulness* he has to force their hand slightly. *Pharmakon*, as a psychotropic drug, is what forces a change within the perceptive mean itself: both body and mind are affected. Music does this by establishing a mood; but the ambiguity of words unsettles it (which is why O'Rourke's song is so puzzling).[495]

On the other hand, they cannot be allowed to notice Socrates' role as *pharmakon*, or else the purpose would be lost because people only *truly change* on their *own* accord. Socrates tries to kick-start their moral perception, but can only resort to their free will to change. And so, in the role of *pharmakon*, he yanks at them with provocative questioning with the intention of decentering them, of jostling their beliefs – in an attempt to see if it dawns on them that they are not seeing aright. For Socrates *knows* they do not possess a sense of moral perception. He can see this because their attitudes do not match their words, and yet they go through life acting as if they did. Not because they are constantly lying (which in a sense they are) – but because they are themselves oblivious to the fact that they are doing this. Self-deception is Charmides' headache. The cure, supposedly, is a combination of *pharmakon* and *epode* – perhaps something like O'Rourke's song.

By a priori not accepting another's argument without scrutiny, Socrates personifies the skepticism that gives birth to philosophical investigation. In one of the rare moments in which he does talk of his methods (before telling Critias of a dream[496] of his) he says, 'I dare say that what I am saying is nonsense, and yet if a man has any feeling of what is due to himself, he cannot let the thought which comes into his mind pass away unheeded and unexamined.' (173a) Socrates is here very clear regarding the philosopher's dedication to the careful inspection of thoughts, which is also an attention to discourse. Given the moral backbone to the elenchus, this examination seems to be grounded on a sifting of belief, and as far as true beliefs go, Socrates seems to have no doubt that he holds them. In *Gorgias*, he tells Polus that he is objectively right and Polus objectively wrong in his opinion even before they have started their discussion: 'I believe that I and you and the rest of mankind believe that committing injustice is worse [for the agent] than is suffering it.' (Gorgias, 474b) This of course begs the question, 'What in the world could Socrates mean by saying that Polus and the multitudes who agree with him "believe" the opposite of what they assert?' (Vlastos SS 23) For this to make sense, Socrates must be using 'belief' in a different way: 'in that marginal sense of the word in which we may all be said to "believe" innumerable things that

[493] 'If I say "I have never been in Asia Minor", where do I get this knowledge from? I have not worked it out, no one told me; my memory tells me. – So I can't be wrong about it? Is there a truth here which I *know*? – I cannot depart from this judgment without toppling all other judgments with it.' (Wittgenstein, On Certainty 419)

[494] Nor surely, of all Skeptics. Namely, I would like to pursue further investigation on Sextus Empiricus.

[495] 'In order for writing to produce . . . the "opposite" effect from what one might expect, in order for this *pharmakon* to show itself, with use, to be injurious, its effectiveness, its power, its *dunamis* must, of course, be ambiguous . . . it can only be out of something like writing – or the *pharmakon* – that the strange difference between inside and outside can spring'. (Derrida 103)

[496] This dream, which I do not have the opportunity to go into here, is another ruse to determine Critias' character. In this case, Socrates determines Critias' shortsightedness in regards of the sort of knowledge *sophrosyne* provides. For Critias, valid knowledge is that of *episteme* and *phronesis*. He does not respond with understanding to Socrates' reading of different sorts of wisdom, namely of knowledge as a 'knowledge of ignorance'.

have never entered our heads but are nonetheless entailed by what we believe in the common use of the word. I shall call the latter "overt" and the former "covert" belief.'[497] This does not mean that Socrates does not believe that Polus and the rest believe p, but that 'along with their (overt) belief in p, they have certain other (overt) beliefs which entail not-p. In this sense they do (covertly) believe not-p.' (23)

It is also on account of this 'tremendous assumption' Vlastos says he is making – that 'whoever has a false moral belief will always have at the same time true beliefs entailing the negation of that false belief.' (25) This attack is the purpose of the 'standard elenchus', the pattern that Vlastos claims (11) is present in all elenctic argument, and consists in the following steps, easily traced in Socrates' counterarguments of Charmides' definitions: 1) The interlocutor (Charmides) asserts a thesis, p, (e.g. 1st definition: *sophrosyne* is quietness), which Socrates deems false. He then 2) 'secures agreement to further premises' (Charmides agrees that to read quickly is better than to read quietly, etc.) and 3) argues that these premises entail not-p (since *sophrosyne* is good and reading quickly is better than quietly), thus enabling him to claim to have demonstrated that p is false. And in 2) we have the reason why the argumentative logic in Charmides is so awkward, as well as the element that distinguishes the elenchus from dialectics: the premises are 'logically unsecured within that argument. He asks the interlocutor if he agrees, and if he gets agreement he goes on from there.' (13)

What is extraordinary in the elenchus, and what baffled Vlastos to the point of calling it 'the problem of the elenchus' is that the interlocutors actually concede Socrates their agreement on these trunked-up premises. And this is extraordinary because 'How do you "compel" your adversary to affirm what he denies? In an argument your only means of compulsion are logical.' (20) Socrates plays rhetorical wizardry of the puzzling kind, like O'Rourke's song he first charms and then leads into *aporia*. Vlastos compares the elenchus with 'compelling a witness to testify against himself.'[498] But even by agreeing to not-p, 'Has he [the witness] then been compelled to testify that p is false? He has not. Confronted with the conflict in his testimony, it is still up to him to decide which of the conflicting statements he wants to retract.' So the witness, Vlastos continues, 'if he had had his wits about him, might have retorted: ". . . I have other options. For example, I could decide that p is true and q false. Nothing you have proved denies me this alternative."' (21) Apparently, this is what Critias attempts[499] to do at the end of Socrates' elenchus in 164. Notice that Socrates drops his bait by starting with the conclusion in the form of a question.

[497] Vlastos gives the following example: 'if I believe overtly that Mary is John's sister and that John is Bill's grandfather, I may be said to believe covertly that Mary is Bill's great-aunt, even if I never thought of the fact – indeed, even if I do not have the word "great-aunt" in my vocabulary.' (23)

[498] In other words, the elenchus wants to lead the interlocutor into admitting perjury. But this is a special notion of perjury, for since the elenchus targets one's own beliefs, the conclusion is that one could only have lied to oneself. The elenchus, then, is a therapy of self-deceit.

[499] I say 'attempts' because Critias does not pinpoint if and where he has taken a wrong curve and so cannot detect which premise to retract. But he knows Socrates has led him on, and so would be willing to shake off any premise provided he does not have to concede that *p* is false.

> 'I am surprised you think temperate men to be ignorant of their temperance?' [which Critias denies.[500] Socrates then enters the obscure elenchus:] 'were you not saying, just now, that craftsmen might be temperate in doing another's work, as well as in doing their own?' – 'I was, but what is your drift?' – 'I have no particular drift, but wish you could tell me whether a physician who cures a patient may do good to himself and good to his patient also . . . and he who does his duty acts temperately . . . But must the physician necessarily know when his treatment is likely to prove beneficial? . . . Then the physician may sometimes do good or harm, without knowledge of which he has done, and yet in doing good acts temperately . . . Then in doing good he may act temperately, and be temperate, but not know his own temperance?' (164a-c)

Refusing Socrates' conclusion, Critias says 'But that, Socrates . . . is impossible, and therefore if this is, as you imply, the necessary consequence of any of my previous admissions, I will withdraw them and will not be ashamed to acknowledge that I made a mistake, rather than admit that a man can be temperate or wise who does not know himself.' (164c-d) His humility, given his prideful outbreak against Charmides, is rather stunning. But it is extremely short-lived, for as soon as he finishes illustrating his next definition, he discloses his desire to 'leave the previous discussion – in which I know not whether you or I are more right' (165b) and take up the reins of a new one, forgoing the defense of his testimony. Yet this ploy will bring him into more trouble. Critias slides out of the elenchus and into the Delphic riddle.

For Socrates, then, there is apparently no complete separation between logic, and moral knowledge.[501] For both proceed from the same sense of order, a sensibility that things relate. And this is one of the reasons why Socrates feels absolutely justified in refuting definitions that do not, *prima facie*, appear incorrect. He knows he is right given the pragmatic value of what Vlastos calls 'inductive evidence', i.e. given his experience in the elenctic testing of beliefs. This is why he does not hesitate to repeatedly mock Critias, whilst appearing to flatter him.[502]

## The Delphic riddle

Critias takes a crucial leap when he states that he believes the riddle to be translatable into another, namely the Delphic riddle of self-knowledge. It is a leap also in the sense that he has proposed to cross borders into the supernatural. Critias says the inscription is a salutation, a special (divine) form of addressing those who enter, and that the meaning of this salutation of 'Know thyself!' is equivalent to 'Be temperate!' This is one of the most significant passages in the discourse, which introduces the last definition of *sophrosyne* as self-knowledge.

> 'For I would almost say that self-knowledge is the very essence of temperance, and in this I agree with him who dedicated the inscription 'Know thyself!' at Delphi. That inscription, if I am not mistaken, is put there as a sort of salutation which the god addresses to those who enter the temple – as much as to say that the

[500] This is a delightfully mocking trick question: it would indeed be a good sign if Critias identified temperance with ignorance, if only his pride would let him.
[501] Logic here (again) does not mean rational discourse, but stems from the ancient meaning of *logos* as pattern. Socrates' therapy is directly related with the fact that 'Most people do not realize that practice in . . . arguments . . . has a bearing on morals.' (Epictetus 1,7,1)
[502] For instance (there are many): 'And some great man, my friend, is wanted, who will satisfactorily determine for us whether there is nothing which has an inherent property of relation to self'. (169a)

> ordinary salutation of 'Hail!' is not right, and that the exhortation 'Be temperate!' is far better. If I rightly understand the meaning of the inscription, the god speaks to those who enter his temple, not as men speak, but whenever a worshipper enters, the first word which he hears is 'Be temperate!' This, however, like a prophet he expresses in a sort of riddle, for 'Know thyself!' and 'Be temperate!' are the same, as I maintain, and as the words imply, and yet they may be thought to be different. And succeeding sages, who added "Never too much", or "Give a pledge, and evil is nigh at hand" . . . for they imagined that 'Know thyself!' was a piece of advice which the god gave, and not his salutation of the worshipers at their first coming in, and they dedicated their own inscriptions under the idea that they too would give equally useful pieces of advice.' (164d-165a)

Schmid's reading of this section clearly abuses Critias' description. Schmid's bias against Critias (for the figure of Critias as the evil tyrant is the bulwark of his book) leads him to attempt to undermine Critias' interpretation of the salutation by claiming that 'The real meaning of Critias' speech begins to be made clear when it is compared to the actual religious tradition he invokes.' He then bases his attack on the suggestion that Critias is, with his speech, atheistically opposing this tradition: 'The Apollonian ideal . . . cannot be separated from the moral injunctions with which it is associated. It is the normative voice of revelation.' (37) But Critias has said nothing to imply this separation in the original version of the salutation, only its derivatives (invented by the sages), which he criticizes. Critias is clearly arguing that the salutation is the correct form of understanding the riddle, and criticizing the verbose and transposed sub-versions of it that the sages later produced. Schmid has not noticed that Critias is making a distinction between two distinct forms of exhortation, and goes on to say that 'Critias' account of the inscription, however, does imply that this "beautiful speech" is of merely human origin, invented by a clever man who ascribed it to a god, and he goes on to imply that it functions not as a norm for morally rational, sophron human beings, but as a greeting between equals'.[503] (37-8) But this is clearly a mistake, for Critias has said 'that the ordinary salutation of 'Hail!' is not right, and that the exhortation 'Be temperate!' is far better.' This form of greeting is not even of the same nature as 'the ordinary salutation' to be compared as such; nor is it to be valued as the same ('is far better'), i.e. Critias has in no way stated in his account that this is not a 'moral injunction', as Schmid accuses him of.[504]

Quite on the contrary, Critias states that 'the god speaks . . . not as men speak'. What I hear Critias saying is that there is a special way of gods addressing men, and that it is not (as Schmid has him say) by an ordinary greeting like 'Hail!' (i.e. not as men salute each other) but by a greeting that in itself includes moral content. One godly exhortation is equivalent to another godly exhortation (Be temperate = Know thyself) because the gods (this Critias implies) all say one big, single thing, as it were. (One same sound – of one same intention – that are broken down into different translations.) So what Critias may be trying to say is that it is the sages are simple imitators of divine words, and that all that they do is imitate an ethical sense by producing versions of trivial senses. The 'succeeding sages' have failed to understand that tautology, and are speaking in another

[503] I take it that Schmid has been influenced by Tuckey's depiction of Critias as a man who has 'largely abandoned traditional beliefs', especially his remark on Critias' 'poem on the origin of belief in the gods, in which he declares that the gods are but an invention of kings and rulers who wished to cow their subjects and secure their obedience.'

[504] 'Whereas the traditional ideal represents the truth as deriving from a divine origin, Critias attributes it to superior humans.' Moreover, he says that 'Whereas the tradition represents moderation and self-knowledge as a norm for all humans alike, Critias asserts it as the self-recognition of an elite convinced of their own superiority.' (38) My reading is that Critias, in his speech, is saying that this elite is of a 2nd, worldly, order. So Schmid cannot next say that 'whereas the tradition counsels the inseparability of moral virtue and true self-knowledge, Critias claims this is due to misunderstanding.' (38)

language, as it were. By incrementing particular descriptions, they are explaining by making distinctions contained within the mother-riddle, separating the amalgamated core ('for "Know thyself!" and "Be temperate!" are the same') into shreds of particulars ('but may be thought to be different') - (We shall soon veer *into this point* with Derrida's Plato.)

On the other hand, Schmid says that, since Critias purportedly takes the greeting as one between equals, it is 'as if to say that the man (such as Critias) who knows what it really means is himself like a god.' (38) We know that this is a correct description of his character, but his words here do not point in that sense and need to be accounted for first. The way I see it, Schmid is reading all arguments directly through his characterization of the interlocutors, committing the mistake of losing track of the actual wording in the text. Apart from his hubristic outbreaks, Critias has not been a weak opponent (especially when we compare him to Socrates' behavior).[505] The thing is (but this Schmid does not point to this as the way of reading this section) that Socrates can read him and knows he is lying. He knows that Critias' words do not picture him as an atheist, but that his history, which Plato closely knew, does. Although this is the factual basis for Schmid's accusation of atheism, he chooses to read this fact into Critias' recount of the Delphic dictum. But he simply cannot if Critias is lying - or using Vlastos' term, deceiving.

When Schmid summarizes his sense of Critias' atheism, he says that 'Critias, still under the guise of seeming to embrace the traditional ideal, actually offers a counternotion to it'. (38) But what I am trying to say is that he cannot be accused of pretending, but must be accused of lying. Socrates is properly under the guise of the Thracian physician because it really is as if he were the Therapist. Allegorically he is the Therapist. (But to understand this we need to discover his veiled intentions in the *Charmides*.) Critias is not an as-if atheist, what Socrates is discovering is he truly is an impious man. The fact is that Socrates' words are allegorically a true description of his own intentions, whereas Critias' words are false. Schmid has overlooked Critias' words (his Delphic allegory) by focusing all his attention on his character; when the key lies in paying attention to the difference between the two. In short, if we are to recognize Socrates' right to irony, we must also recognize Critias' right to attempt to deceive (and Socrates' to mock him because he catches his act). Socrates is not technically refuting Critias (Schmid is) – Socrates is a mocking witness to his blasphemy. Schmid is so far into characterizing Critias as the Tyrant that he has forgotten that he knows he is also a sophist.[506]

Vlastos' answer to the question 'Does Socrates cheat?' is that Socrates never cheats 'when arguing seriously'. (1991 134) But as with irony, we must be able to detect his seriousness from context – and this poses a problem. Vlastos' supplies a criterion for detecting that Socrates is speaking in a serious vein: it is when he 'So this is my claim: when Socrates is searching for the right way to live, in circumstances in which it is reasonable for him to think of the search as

[505] Albeit his 'sophistical character . . . he enters fully into the conversation with Socrates, and is no 'yes-man' like the characters of Plato's later and more dogmatic period. He contributes much to the argument, but is as incapable of consistent logical reasoning as he is of detecting those sophisms which Socrates not infrequently allows himself.' (Tuckey 22)

[506] 'Critias would become infamous in antiquity as the author of *Sisyphus*, the first Greek play to articulate explicitly the idea of atheism. This idea is reflected in his speech on self-knowledge in the *Charmides* . . . the historical person Critias was at once a poet of traditional aristocratic values, and an atheist and sensualist . . . a student of the Sophists, and – this is the key point – a companion of Socrates.' (Schmid 12) Schmid footnotes that 'Euripides is also sometimes mentioned as the author of the *Sisyphus*, but it was attributed to Critias in ancient times.' (174 n.24)

obedience to divine command, his argument cannot involve willful untruth.' (IM 134) This, in turn, is obviously dependent on an engrained Socratic sense of piety, which Vlastos deems incontestable.[507] So ultimately the Socratic elenchus is a search of mystical seriousness. Socrates is ordained by the gods. Some things are sacred, because they originate from a sacred source. Like in the Garden, the sacred trees live with the others, yet they draw their water from the 'fountain's sliding foot', which is where Marvell's bird sings. We now understand why Socrates will not take this 'Delphic' definition – Critias' blasphemy - lightly.

## Words: Duality in Oneness

This separation of an essence into words is the oracular science.[508] As Aristotle notes, the division of a universal holds considerable perceptive effort: like the wine taster, the oracle's palate requires a special attention to detail.[509] By getting Critias to think about the Delphic dictum, Socrates wishes Critias to reconnect with *logos,* to be *morally reasonable*, which means forgetting his ego. But the internal order *logos* may provide is only truly grounded as the result of having thought through contradictions.[510] For '*logos* is a more effective *pharmakon*. This is what Gorgias calls it. As a *pharmakon*, *logos* is at once good and bad; it is not at the outset governed exclusively by goodness or truth.' And we must notice that this difference is temporally separated by the discernment of ambiguity. 'It is only within this ambivalence and this mysterious indetermination of *logos*, and after these have been recognized that Gorgias *determines* truth *as a world*, a structure or order, the counterpart *(kosmos)* of *logos*.' It is only *before* 'such a determination [that] we are in the ambivalent, indeterminate space of the *pharmakon* of that which in *logos* remains potency, potentiality, and is not yet the transparent language of knowledge'. (Derrida 115) This describes both a singularity and a duality, within a temporality.

But we never finish, never leave the unfinished loop ('I imagine singing I imagine') of settled order of *logos* and the indeterminate *pharmakon* - *unless we find silence*; and *stay* silent. The region where thought attempts to listen to its own speech is the epilogue Derrida writes for Plato, as *he* is pictured writing, carrying out the self-reflexive act of *nous poietikos.* A brief excerpt of this imagined nonsense:

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[507] Describing Socrates' acceptance of the supernatural, 'a premise fixed for us in history - that, far ahead of his time as Socrates is in so many ways, in this part of his thought he is a man of his time', 'so firmly attested in our principal sources - Plato's and Xenophon's Socratic writings – that to cut it out of them would be surgery which kills the patient', Vlastos says that Socrates 'subscribes unquestioningly to the age-old view that side by side with the physical world accessible to our senses, there exists another, populated by mysterious beings, personal like ourselves, but, unlike ourselves, having the power to invade at will the causal order to which our own actions are confined'. (IM 158)

[508] 'But what if Being in its essence *needs to use* the essence of man? If the essence of man consists in thinking the truth of Being? Then thinking must poetize on the riddle of Being. It brings the dawn of thought into the neighborhood of what is for thinking.' (Heidegger, The Anaximander Fragment 58)

[509] It is 'easier to discern each object of sense when in its simple form than when an ingredient in a mixture . . . the reason being that component elements tend to efface [the distinctive characteristics of] one another.' (PN 447a)

[510] 'When the attention has revealed the contradiction in something on which it has been fixed, a kind of loosening takes place. By persevering in this course we attain detachment.' (Weil 98)

> 'He listens, means to distinguish, between two repetitions./ He is searching for gold. *Pollakis de legomena kai aei akouomena*... "Often repeated and constantly attended to for many years, it is at last with great effort freed from all alloy, like gold..." and the philosopher's stone. The "golden rule."/ One ought to distinguish, between two repetitions./ - But they repeat each other, still; they substitute for each other./ - Nonsense: they don't replace each other, since they are added... / - Precisely...' . . . 'The night passes. In the morning, knocks are heard at the door. They seem to be coming from outside, this time... / Two knocks... four... / - But maybe it's just a residue, a dream, a bit of dream left over, an echo of the night... that other theater, those knocks from without...' (170-1)

Derrida mimics standing within Plato's own oracular draft: writing within (the *logos* of *mythos*, or the *mythos* of *logos,* as you wish, at the fountain's sliding foot meanings are slippery because imbricated). At the beginning of the essay, Derrida had mimicked Plato's Socrates: 'A text is not a text unless it hides from the first comer, from the first glance, the law of its composition and the rules of its game.' (63) (This elision is the invisible structure that makes the object *require* of the reader a particular kind of attention to words: each poem is a particular game we are called upon to play, one we do not know the rules to beforehand.) And (jumping a paragraph) he immediately moves on to mimic Heidegger's ontological problem: 'If reading and writing are one, as is easily thought these days, if reading *is* writing, this oneness . . . the is that couples reading with writing must rip apart. One must then, in a single gesture, but doubled, read and write'. (63-4) And yet to add is not 'to add any old thing' – he who, through theory, through *episteme*, like Critias 'would refrain from committing anything of himself, would not read at all.'

But reading and writing, as Barthes has shown, work within a grammatical structure, and so this 'supplement must be rigorously prescribed' not necessarily by a guide, 'but by the necessities of the game, by the logic of play, signs to which the system of all textual powers must be accorded and attuned.' The text is Derrida's sun king: and Derrida is simultaneously the king and his sons, in his liquid form as *pharmakon*, which can easily propagate, *disseminate*.[511] This makes learning by heart (*mneme*) possible, contrary to what Thamus had proclaimed in his denial of writing. *Logos* itself necessitates: and *hence* the oracular mode whereby to know oneself is the discovery of following divine dictum. The drive to speak is an otherworldly desire: 'We've said all we intend to say – yet our words are many and push on, playing, repeating.' (Derrida 65) Writing is a practice of inscription, a house we build and must dwell in, live in it. 'It is because language is the house of Being, that we reach what is by constantly going through this house.' (WPF 133) Within this filial relation, Derrida next says that 'Plato, after having in a sense reappropriated writing, pushes his irony – and his seriousness – to the point of rehabilitating a certain form of play. Compared with other pastimes, playful hypomnesic writing, second-rate writing' – a consideration which, Hadot has told us, almost led scholars to neglect Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* – 'is preferable, should "go ahead." (154) And having unveiled Plato's deep sense of irony, Derrida says that Plato 'plays at taking play seriously . . . the stunning hand Plato has dealt himself . . . human affairs in general do not in his eyes need to be taken seriously.' (157)

Writing, for Derrida, leads to its own tautological encirclement: 'What is is not what it is, identical and identical to itself, unless it *adds to itself* the possibility of being *repeated* as such. And its

[511] 'Sperm, water, ink, paint, perfumed dye: the *pharmakon* always penetrates like a liquid; it is absorbed, drunk, introduced into the inside . . . In liquid, opposites are more easily mixed. Liquid is the element of the *pharmakon*.' (Emerson, "The Poet" 152)

identity is hollowed out by that addition, withdraws itself in the supplement that presents it.' And then he says that the 'true and the untrue are both species of repetition.' (168) On the one hand, within this movement of complex irony, 'the *eidos* can give rise to repetition as *anamnesis* or *maieutics*', and Socrates' *pharmakeia* may operate as a moral trigger, pulling into 'the good'. This is the half of truth, pertaining to the 'intelligible form of ideality . . . which can be repeated, being the same, the clear, the stable, the identifiable in its equality in itself.' (168) Here there is meaningfulness, value, ground: 'Here repetition gives itself out to be a repetition of life. Tautology is life only going out of itself to come home to itself.' The other half (untruth) is material, phenomenal, just words: meaningless but the body that hosts the soul, the objective presence, since 'the presence of what is' - *anima* – 'gets lost, disperses itself, multiplies itself through mimemes, icons, phantasms, simulacra, etc. . . . And this type of repetition is the possibility of becoming-perceptible-to-the-senses: nonideality.' (168) Here there is body but no mind, here 'tautology is life going out of itself beyond return.' (169) And these two faces are inseparable: and so neither good nor bad, true or untrue, because *both*. And this – that he was *pharmakon,* writing - Socrates has told Critias, by asking him whether the physician, the *pharmakeus*, may not do harm without knowledge, or good without knowledge (for one cannot say, as of *esse*, what 'Good' means).

Derrida's effort has been to describe the duplicity within the unity, and the shifting motions of language as it attempts to speak the whole. Heidegger, despite everything, focuses on the union of the sign; trying to retrace words to their original thought. Heidegger tells us that the Greeks gave birth to logic in response to a calling onto thought. 'The doctrine of thinking is called logic because thinking develops in the *legein* of the *logos*. We are barely capable of comprehending that at one time this was not so, that a calling became "needful" in order to set thinking on the way of the *logos* into the *legein*.' (WCT 168) Heidegger tries to trace back not the path of logocentric, propositional thinking, but the direction that summons and thus actualizes thinking itself. In the mode of *nous poietikos*, Heidegger is thinking thinking. He finds evidence of this calling in a fragment of Parmenides, no. 6. 'The usual translation of the saying is: "One should both say and think that Being is." This is the beginning of a quest of translation aimed at understanding the nature of the calling on thinking. Yet he knows the 'question cannot be settled, now or ever. If we proceed to the encounter of what is here in question, the calling, the question becomes in fact only more problematical.' But this is itself the definition of thinking – 'When we are questioning within this problematic, we are thinking. Thinking itself is a way. We respond to the way only by remaining underway.' (168-9)

Attending to the way while saying is what the poets do.[512] But the words are less important than actions: be they physical acts or the *legein* that is the activity of thinking. Whether the watershed of thinking is called *logos* or the being of being *(eon emmenai)* (Intro.) is, in the end (in the beginning), relatively unimportant, 'for *logos* is the name for the Being of beings'. (L 77) What ultimately matters for Heidegger, what he expresses in his recurring mythologemes, is that thinking remains underway, that there is a direction, a gravitational pull. To *try to say that*. So it matters that we poise to hear it but also that there are words to speak and think it. 'Once . . . in the beginning of Western thinking, the essence of language flashed in the light of Being - once, when Heraclitus

[512] 'Thus *sophron* signifies that which can adhere to whatever has been indicated, can devote itself to it, and can dispatch itself toward it (can get under way toward it). Because it is appropriate such behavior becomes skillful.' (Heidegger L 50)

thought the *logos* as his guiding word, so as to think in this word the Being of beings.' (L 78) So thinking is sustained by a contemplative attention devoted to that word. 'But the lightning abruptly vanished. No one held onto its streak of light and the nearness of what it illuminated.' Be it either the lighting bolt of *eon emmenai* or the thunderclap of *logos* that resounds, what matters first is the spark, the motive for metaphor which so startled the primitives into thinking. But to think is to be lost. 'We see this lightning only when we station ourselves in the storm of Being. Yet everything today betrays the fact that we bestir ourselves only to drive storms away.' If *ataraxia* is sought as an end it is a distraction, it 'is only anesthesia; more precisely the narcotization of anxiety in the face of thinking.' The *pharmakon* symbolizes poetry's calling into the draft. Yet there, there must be a center that is not a storm, and eye of the storm - or else one would not be able to heed one's own thinking. Thus 'to think is surely a peculiar affair . . . The word of thinkers knows no authors, in the sense of writers' It is selfless, and also 'without charm.' In this essay, Heidegger is ultimately a praying mystic. 'The word of thinking rests in the sobering quality of what it says.' And yet perhaps not, perhaps also the lover of poetry, given that 'just the same, thinking changes the world.' The deeper into the abyss words go, they 'offer promise of a greater brightness.' (L 78)

There is a way for poets to say. 'The more venturesome dare the saying . . . in what direction is that to be said which the sayers must say? . . . Their saying because it concerns the conversion, speaks not only from both realms but from the oneness of the two, insofar as that oneness has already come to be as the saving unification.' (WPF 133) In this mythology of the primitive, Orphic draft, there is a sacred call that the poet heeds. The mark of the poets who venture is 'that to them the nature of poetry becomes worthy of questioning, because they are poetically on the track of that which, for them, is what must be said.' (141) This mystical necessity to sing is possible because they are open to *pharmakon*, the duplicity of the sign, and so 'are under way on the track of the holy because they experience the unholy as such. Their song over the land hallows. Their singing hails the integrity of the globe of Being.' Embracing contradiction, the poet can praise the world, 'and sing the healing whole in the midst of the unholy.' (140) As Aristotle has told us, the mean is potentially both opposites. As *pharmakeus,* crafter of effects and heeder of the call of life, the poet is the therapist who reminds his readers that we must recall our condition; and praise too by singing, or reading, with him. This is coming to know-by -heart, for 'the hard thing consists not only in the difficulty of forming the work of language, but in the difficulty of going over from the saying word of the still covetous vision of things, from the work of the eyes, to the "work of the heart". The song is hard because the singing may no longer be a solicitation, but must be existence.' (WPF 138-9)

In religion, it is common for practices to speak instead of words - in religion value is assigned in sacraments, which assume a multitude of grass-root forms. Sacraments, or rituals, constitute the actions - the evidence of belief. In a sense, rituals are like tattoos: both a public expression, a statement directed outwards, and simultaneously a promise, a gesture of embracing certain attitudes. As a public display of belief – because it is public – the gesture constitutes proof of one's committal to attitudes. Writing looks like this gesture, and mostly, from what we have seen, the poet's intentions are not at all clear: just the opposite. 'To sing . . . means: to belong to the precint of beings themselves. This precint, as the very nature of language, is Being itself. To

sing the song means to be present in what is present itself. It means *Dasein*, existence.' (WPF 138) But the poet does not sing, the poet writes. Singing is our part.

## The Epilogue

> 'We generously made the concession, and never even considered the impossibility of a man knowing in a sort of way that which he does not know at all. According to our admission, he knows that which he does not know – than which nothing, as I think, can be more irrational. And yet, after finding us so easy and good-natured, the inquiry is still unable to discover the truth, but mocks us to a degree, and has insolently proved the inutility of temperance and wisdom if truly described by a definition such as we have spent all this time in discussing and fashioning together – which result, as far as I am concerned, is not so much to be lamented.' (175c-d)

Although the ending looks like a self-professed acknowledgment of aporetic defeat, the epilogue of the *Charmides* is another key piece in Socrates' surreptitious irony, as well as a defense of poetic attention. Tuckey completely misses out on any of its irony.[513] Schmid has more to say on the epilogue, but equally misses out on its mocking irony. The key to interpreting this section I owe to a footnote of Vlastos, where he calls for caution against a Socratic trick that Vlastos has detected in a number of dialogues: his misleading use of pronouns.[514] The defeat that Socrates, in ironic modesty, blames himself for is in fact, as should be obvious by now, Critias' failure to meet the test of the elenchus. Socrates ties the nature of this defeat to a failure in interpreting meaning, and he shows this by ironically putting himself in the place of Critias, 'I' - that is Critias - 'have failed to discover what that is to which the lawgiver gave this name of temperance or wisdom.' (175b) Critias had failed to see a sense in which 'advantage' could be read (as referring to the whole and not just himself), and hence could not answer Socrates' last essaying question: 'How then can wisdom be advantageous, when it produces no advantage? – Apparently it cannot, Socrates.' (175a) Critias' failure is linked to an incorrect assignment of meaning to 'knowledge'.[515]

Schmid reads this section literally. 'But then why at the end does Socrates personify the logos [the elenchus, the inquiry], shifting the blame to it for the false conclusion?' (148) He links this personification to the *Laches*, where Socrates 'invokes a laughing Courage, who would mock them if they quit in their attempt to catch her.' (194a) In the *Charmides*, Schmid goes on, 'the logos is personified, not the virtue, but the effect is similar.' The effect would be to 'return to the task of inquiry', given the falsity of the *logos*. But from my perspective, Socrates' rebuke is retrospective, and moreover one that does not leave Socrates too concerned, for he has already concluded his test and established the nature of those whom he has inquired. It is not an abstract entity, this *logos*

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513 'After the exchange of a few jocular remarks, Socrates agrees to Charmides' request. So the dialogue ends. This concluding section of the dialogue requires but little comment.' (89)

514 Vlastos lists various 'ironical substitutions of "we" for "you"', and regarding the Charmides in particular, points to 175b, which reads, 'We have admitted that there is knowledge of knowledge although the argument said "No".' Vlastos proceeds to note that 'it was only Critias who had argued for "knowledge of knowledge": Socrates had argued "No"'. (SS 27)

515 'Critias' refutation is founded on what we have seen to be his most characteristic trait throughout the dialogue: his absolute unwillingness to acknowledge epistemic limits.' (Schmid 141) The theme of *episteme* in the dialogue is more extensive that I can pursue here.

that 'laughs at our inabilities to see its and our own deficiencies', as Schmid says in closing his book; it is the very person of Socrates laughing at Critias, who has 'insolently proved', through his *hubris* and desire for absolute knowledge and control, the wrong – the truly, morally *useless* - definition. *Logos* is neither a thing nor a mechanism - it is the capacity to be right or wrong, and of a person, as participative within a community. Schmid inadvertently admits to having overlooked Socrates' irony by saying that Socrates is 'conspicuously silent throughout his summary as to what role Critias may have had in their coming to such untoward conclusions.' (150) The 'inquiry' is Critias; and in this manner Socrates sarcastically shows us the extent of his irony and the playful seriousness of his elenchus. At the same time, the fact that he can get away with it is the final proof of Critias' hubristic blindness: the sign of a useless reader (no good can come from this).

It is because this final speech is retrospective that Socrates' biggest regret is that he has learned the *epode* for nothing: it has produced 'a thing which is nothing worth,' (175e) for if Critias' description of '*sophrosyne*' is wrong, then Charmides will not be able to benefit from an education from one who does not comprehend the nature of wisdom and temperance. And so the fact looms that 'we readers know that the elenchus is unsuccessful in changing Charmides.' (McCoy 137) If we go back to the Thracian picture, the cure was dependent on *two* sorts of intervention. There was the pharmaceutical effect of the leaf - but Socrates had also claimed that if the soul is already sick, then that will not be of assistance; in that case, only the charm may help: "'Let no one persuade you to cure his head, until he has first given you his soul to be cured by the charm" . . . And he strictly enjoined me not to let anyone, however rich or noble or fair, persuade me to give him the cure, without the charm.' (157b)

'If we take the "incantation" to represent the Socratic elenchus that follows in the dialogue – as no actual magical incantation is ever chanted – then Socrates' goal would seem to be for the elenchus to have a fundamental effect on the inner state of Charmides' soul.' (McCoy 137) But it is by no means merely an intellectual exchange of words (dialectics) that accounts for the shades of incantation and seduction in this text: the whole setting is erotic and pederastic.[516] When Socrates first sees Charmides, he briefly relapses into confession, and admits he 'took the flame' when he caught sight of the inwards of Charmides' garments.[517] In this brusque moment, Socrates exemplifies temperance, *sophrosyne*. And the proof is that this happens under Socrates' mask, which he does not let slip: he must remain the maieutic teacher. Moreover, he centers himself by silently reciting *procheiron*: 'I could no longer contain myself. I thought how well Cydias understood the nature of love, when, in speaking of a fair youth, he warns someone "not to bring the fawn in the sight of the lion to be devoured by him". (155d) His attention is regained through these words, which help Socrates dispel the thought-dulling distractions of Charmides' enchanting powers.[518]

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[516] 'We encounter Socrates in a strongly homosexual ambience' (Dover 154) Charmides teases Socrates at the end, 'I am sure, Socrates, that I do need the charm, and as far as I am concerned, I shall be willing to be charmed by you daily, until you say I have had enough.' (176b) Pederasty was not at all uncommon. 'The project of swapping sex for moral wisdom may seem incredible today. It would not have seemed so in the least to someone in Alcibiades' circumstances at the time.' (Vlastos IM 35) But as Dover puts it, 'the most important aspect of Socrates is his exploitation of the Athenian homosexual ethos as a basis of metaphysical doctrine and philosophical method.' (154)

[517] 'I felt that I had been overcome by a sort of wild-beast appetite. But still when he asked me if I knew the cure for the headache, I answered, though with an effort, that I did know.' (155e)

[518] 'And he came and sat down between Critias and me. But I, my friend,' Socrates confesses to the reader, 'was beginning to feel awkward. My former bold belief in my powers of conversing naturally with him had vanished.' (155c)

The *Charmides* is a battle between kinds of charms, of aesthetic superficiality versus moral depth. Plato uses Socrates' physical ugliness as a counterpoint to Charmides' beauty, engendering the myth of 'inner beauty', the charm of a unique and seductive mind. This stratagem is integral to Socrates' mask of irony: 'In Socrates, erotic irony is intimately connected to dialectical irony . . . Let us be quite clear: the love in question here is homosexual love, precisely because it is educative love.' (Hadot PWF 158). While Critias serves mostly to exemplify dialectical irony, Charmides is Plato's dramatic excuse for erotic irony. Although the theme of pederasty may appear strange to our eyes, it was a common part of the education of boys under the master-disciple paradigm.[519]

The tone of irrepressible seduction with which the dialogue ends[520] reinforces the figure of Socrates as ironic seducer (Charmides has been led to believe that he has passed from the role of passive beloved to a beloved who holds the reins of the enchanted lover, whom he controls)[521] and, moreover, identifies the philosopher with the figure of *Eros*. For Hadot, this identification is the very purpose of the *Symposium*.[522] In this discourse, while the guests at the banquet speak of *Eros* in idealized grandiloquence, Socrates provides a deflated and realistic account of love, 'One, that Love is always the love of something, and two, that that something is what he lacks.' (*Sym.* 200e) And love (like Socrates) cannot be beautiful, but only desired, for it (like Socrates) is fundamentally *desire*. Alcibiades, for his part, relates that 'I've been bitten in the heart, or the mind, or whatever you like to call it, by Socrates' philosophy, which clings like an adder to any young and gifted mind it can get hold of, and does exactly what it likes with it . . . and every one of you [at the banquet] has had his taste of this philosophical frenzy, this sacred rage' (218a) Our friend Charmides is included in this complaint, 'and ever so many more. He's made fools of them all, just as if he were the beloved, not the lover.' (222b) So we are here told that Socrates has won the boy. But the 'winning' I allude to is idiosyncratic – remember that Socrates can only cure if he has his soul first (157b). Discipleship is a premise for effective therapy.

Socrates has forced his interlocutors to realize that they cannot teach him anything, that they are ignorant, and so 'what the interlocutor really desired, then, was to enroll in Socrates' school: the school of consciousness of not-knowing.' (PWF 159) Pederastic seduction was hence tied to the harnessing of disciples, victims to Socrates' *aporia* and the unrequited desire for the true beauty Socrates professed, wisdom: which is, however, knowledge of ignorance. The alleged cruelty Alcibiades bewails regarding Socrates' seduction is that the boys find themselves jumping into an abyss. After having surrendered themselves to Socrates, they suddenly become aware that

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[519] Foucault goes to the length of saying that 'philosophy appeared and with it pederasty . . . When, emerging from the particular arts, philosophy began to inquire concerning all things, it found, as a means of transmitting the wisdom it obtains, the love of boys – which is also the love of noble souls, capable of virtue.' (Foucault 217)

[520] 'But the time for consideration has passed,' Socrates tells Charmides. 'When you are determined on anything, and in the mood of violence, you are irresistible.' 'Do not resist me, then,' Charmides said. 'I shall not resist you then.' (176d)

[521] The erotic tension is between *erastes* and *paidika*, the senior and junior homosexual partners (cf. Dover esp. 16). But sometimes the roles are inverted, and the young, beautiful *paidika* flaunt and manipulate their older lovers. In the *Lysis,* Socrates tells Hippothales that 'beautiful boys are filled with pride and conceit when they are praised and glorified . . . And the more conceited they are, the harder they are to catch . . . what sort of hunter would you think a man who in hunting roused his prey and made it harder to catch?' (205d-206a). And so Plato brings out the 'relation between *eros* and tyranny . . . so the beloved, accustomed to the fawning behavior of his lovers, may take for granted his domination of them' (Schmid 8) It is in this tone that Charmides tells Socrates to dictate the charm to him.

[522] 'The whole dialogue is constructed so as to make the reader guess the identity between the figures of Socrates and Eros.' (160)

they have nothing to hold on to; the *pharmakon* returns neither embrace nor answer.[523] But the point is that even Socrates himself does not have an answer, although he keeps pointing at a sense of an answer by asking questions. The logical pair of the question is the answer. This is a story of unrequited love. Discussing the figure of the sage, Hadot compares Socrates to a *daimon*, an intermediate and indescribable being, standing between gods and men. *Pharmakon,* the mediator. 'This is why he is a *philo-sopher*, a lover of wisdom . . . *Eros* is the desire for his own perfection, which is to say, for his true self. He suffers from being deprived of the plenitude of being, and he strives to attain it.' (162) His pining boy-lovers mirror this yearning in their own unreciprocated, bodily love.[524]

In the end Charmides fails to listen to Socrates' singing, the tone in his voice – Socrates who is simultaneously *pharmakon, Eros* and *daimon* -, and so Charmides does not give himself over to him in the dialogue, as so many others, such as Alcibiades had done. His pride is too great for self-loss. It is his *hubris* that makes Schmid say that the epilogue 'echoes the scene in the prologue, when Charmides casually presumed to order Socrates to give him the incantation'.[525] (150) Charmides, the future tyrant, has no desire for self-surrender, and thus can have none for reading. And thus no use for Socrates. Critias and Charmides refuse to listen any further to the playful irony of Socrates, and dictate his death.[526] In the *Charmides*, it is physical beauty and violence (*bia*) that win the day against morality. 'I shall not resist you then, I replied.' (176d)

The theme of irresistibility recalls Laín's junction of persuasion (*peitho*), necessity (*ananke*) and force (*bia*). These also come together, again, under the hoodwinking of *pharmakon,* whereby language gains the power to alter the perceptive mean. And this can go both ways. Under an effort of Apollinian restraint, Socrates recites, prays the moral charm of Cydias, in order to secure the tranquil detachment of ironic thinking. Here the mean is summoned back into neutrality, from its reactive flight. But the *pharmakon* can also serve to ignite Dyonisian impulses.[527] And this positive, unrestrained sense may even prove to be morally useful, in the (also necessary) form of an

[523] Alcibiades, like many other boys, had fallen madly in love with Socrates. Yet Socrates, as stated in the beginning of the *Charmides*, is interested in the beauty of the noble soul. 'Yet Socrates said nothing. Day after day he watched and kept still. Why so? The only reasonable answer is that he wanted Alcibiades to find out the truth for himself by himself. The irony in his love for Alcibiades, riddling from the start, persisted until the boy found the answer the hard way, in a long night of anguished humiliation, naked next to Socrates, and Socrates a block of ice.' (Vlastos IM 42)

[524] As he turns down his attempt at sexual conquest, Socrates mockingly warns Alcibiades of the risk of misplaced desire: 'if you're trying to barter your own [outer] beauty for the [inner] beauty you have found in me, you're driving a very hard bargain . . . Suppose you're making a mistake and I'm not worth anything at all. The mind's eye begins to see clearly when the outer eyes grow dim – and I fancy yours are still pretty keen.' (Symposium 218e) This (beauty) is not the partner Socrates lusts for.

[525] 'Then I will write out the charm from your dictation,' Charmides said. 'With my consent? Or without my consent?'- 'With your consent, Socrates, he said, laughing.' (156a)

[526] 'And you are about to use violence, without even giving me a hearing in court? – Yes, I shall use violence, he replied, since he orders me, and therefore you had better consider what you will do.' (176c)

[527] 'The next step into mystical states carries us into a realm that public opinion and ethical philosophy have long since branded as pathological, though private practice and certain lyric strains of poetry seem still to bear witness to its ideality. I refer to the consciousness produced by intoxicants and anaesthetics, especially by alcohol. The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the YES function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth. Not through mere perversity do men run after it. To the poor and the unlettered it stands in the place of symphony concerts and of literature.' (VRE 386-7)

Epicurean release.[528] If we recall Heidegger's critique of entangled curiosity and lostness in the They, belief itself must be kept in check. But this time, vigilance is not a therapy against passion, but a counter-therapy against moralism. Playfulness is also a remedy - for the moral headaches morality itself causes (and the same for philosophy in the sense of theorization). The *pharmakon* is thus that which displaces our common sense, our ordinary form of perception and understanding, causing us to be lost and thus seeing anew. It forces one out from the perceptive closure of the They.[529] Poems are the textual equivalent.[530]

## Mask and myth

When Vico traces the etymology of '*logos*', he ultimately conjoins the two meanings of making and doing Critias distinguished within *sophrosyne:* '*logos*, or word, meant also deed.' (Vico 127) This belongs to the tone of thinking of III.5's *nous poietikos*. At the same time, Vico also says that the 'first and proper meaning' of *logos* was '*fabula*, fable . . . *mythos*, myth, whence comes the Latin *mutus*, mute.' This association between silent, mute speech, which 'existed before vocal or articulate' language, shows that '*logos* means both word and idea.' This is the use we have seen of the language of the heart, of inarticulate intention. Thinking is originally a gesture of the soul towards the world, a *wish* to grasp and say it. 'Thus the first language in the first mute times of the nations must have begun with signs,' but these were not immediately but 'gestures or physical objects, which had natural relations to the ideas.' (127) Words are a more articulate invention, tools for thinking, for carrying knowledge around in our memory. Thinking is born in circumspective activity, from the particular need to express ideas or solve problems. But words die in everydayness; poetry means going back to where each word is alive.[531] This is a different form of remembrance than recalling facts.

> 'Attention is the only way to the inexpressible, the only path toward mystery. In fact, it is solidly anchored in the real, and only through allusions occulted in the real is the mystery manifest. The symbols of holy scripture, myths, folk tales, which for millennia have fed and consecrated life, are clothed in the most concrete forms from this earth . . . In the face of reality, the imagination pulls back. On the other hand, attention penetrates it, directly and as a symbol . . . It is, therefore, the most legitimate and absolute form of imagining. That which the ancient text on alchemy undoubtedly alludes to, where it is commended that "the true and not the

[528] 'In Epicureanism, there is an extraordinary reversal of perspective. Precisely because existence seems to the Epicurean to be pure chance, inexorably unique, he greets life like a kind of miracle, a gratuitous, unexpected gift of nature, and existence for him is a wonderful celebration.' (Hadot PWL 209)

[529] And so the They fight back, executing Socrates.

[530] And the poet the agent: 'who introduces questionable facts into his cosmogony . . . the certificate we have of departure from routine, and that here is a new witness . . . Therefore we love the poet, the inventor, who in any form, whether in an ode, or in an action, or in looks and behavior, has yielded us a new thought. He unlocks our chains, and admits us to a new scene.' (Emerson, "The Poet")

[531] In 'common speech . . . words are constantly thrown around on the cheap, and in the process worn out. There is a curious advantage in that. With a worn-out language everybody can talk about everything. But what if we ask specifically what it is to which the word, here the word "thinking", gives a name? Then we attend to the word as word. This is what happened earlier with the word "to call". We are here venturing into the gambling game of language, where our nature is at stake. Nor can we avoid that venture, once we have become aware that - and in what way - thought and poesy, each in its own unmistakable fashion, are the essential telling.' (Heidegger 128)

> fantastic imagination" should be put to work. Clearly, we are to understand this attention where the imagination is present, sublimated, as poison is in medication.' (Campo 176)[532]

Words are animated when they spring from expression, a need for expression. Desire is the starting-point. As with the Big Bang, the attempt to go back to the origin leads to a singular point of dense complexity. Yet it is 'here at the fountain's sliding foot' that Marvell's bird sings.[533] And so the poet circumspectly retreats into the workshop of language (that which Derrida dramaticized for Plato's voice), where all her words are, in that world of forms, the Garden, where she can play them out. The knowledge of ignorance is the motive for metaphor; and yet the ambiguity of metaphor itself forwards the play, the saying it. At least this is the myth of the oracle, a myth so extolled by the Romantics it sometimes encounters due sarcasm ('some flowers soon?', in a garland?). Readers who idealize their favorite authors as magical scribes of immediate, *present* dictation (taking their words from gods that speak to them) - may be shocked when confronted with their actual, scribbled, manuscripts.[534] The shock stems from an idea that writing is as immediate and as primordial as lightning, that it is *the very form of thought*, of *logos* meaning, as Vico says, both word and idea. That this may not be so is shocking to the believer - 'as if inspiration were made up of parts . . . I will never go into the workshop of any great artist again.' (in Brooks, 465) And yet at times[535] it may come very close to exactly that - although most often a good, old poem will take time and scribbling. In either case, to meet the storm, 'When philosophizing you have to descend into the old chaos & feel at home there.' (Wittgenstein CV 74) And then sing.

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[532] My translation.

[533] 'Words are not terms . . . are wellsprings that are found and dug up in the telling . . . If we do not go to the spring again and again, the buckets and kegs stay empty, or their content stays stale . . . to pay heed to what the words say is particularly difficult for us moderns, because we find it hard to detach ourselves from the "at first" of what is common; and if we succeed for once, we relapse all too easily.' (Heidegger 130)

[534] 'Charles Lamb was shocked when he saw the manuscript of Milton's "Lycidas": "'I had thought of the Lycidas as a full-grown beauty – as springing as springing up with all its parts absolute – till, in an evil hour, I was shown the original copy . . . How it staggered me to see the fine things in their ore! interlined, corrected! as if their words were mortal, alterable . . . as if they might have been otherwise.' (Brooks 465)

[535] In Heidegger's later mythology, 'the passage of the balance to the Angel is uncommon . . . This is why the passing-on occurs "sometimes". "Sometimes" here does not at all mean occasionally and at random. "Sometimes" signifies: rarely and at the right time in an always unique instance in a unique manner.' This passage happens within the ordering of *logos*, for the 'equalizing space is the world's inner space, in that it gives space to the wordly whole of the Open.' (WPF 137; 136)

## Another Epilogue

Ammons has made attention his poetic subject. His style, in the tone of much modern poetry following the return to words of the linguistic turn, is straightforward. I too would rather end in such a simple, roundabout manner.

"Poetics", A. R. Ammons

I look for the way
things will turn
out spiralling from a center,
the shape
things will take to come forth in

so that the birch tree white
touched black at branches
will stand out
wind-glittering
totally its apparent self:

I look for the forms
things want to come as

from what black wells of possibility,
how a thing will
unfold:

not the shape on paper -- though
that, too -- but the
uninterfering means on paper:

not so much looking for the shape
as being available
to any shape that may be
summoning itself
through me
from the self not mine but ours.

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# Verse Cited

[i] "Love (III)", George Herbert

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.

"A guest," I answer'd, "worthy to be here";
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

[ii] "The Motive for Metaphor", Wallace Stevens

You like it under the trees in autumn,
Because everything is half dead.
The wind moves like a cripple among the leaves
And repeats words without meaning.

In the same way, you were happy in spring,
With the half colors of quarter-things,
The slightly brighter sky, the melting clouds,
The single bird, the obscure moon--

The obscure moon lighting an obscure world
Of things that would never be quite expressed,
Where you yourself were not quite yourself,
And did not want nor have to be,

Desiring the exhilarations of changes:
The motive for metaphor, shrinking from

The weight of primary noon,
The A B C of being,

The ruddy temper, the hammer
Of red and blue, the hard sound--
Steel against intimation--the sharp flash,
The vital, arrogant, fatal, dominant X.

[iii] The "Our Father"

Our Father, Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.

[iv] "In Memory of W. B. Yeats", W. H. Auden [excerpt]

II

You were silly like us; your gift survived it all:
The parish of rich women,[4] physical decay,
Yourself. Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

[v] "Pet Panther", A. R. Ammons

My attention is a wild
animal: it will if idle
make trouble where there
was no harm: it will
sniff and scratch at the
breath's sills:
it will wind itself tight
around the pulse
or, undistracted by
verbal toys, pommel the
heart frantic: it will
pounce on a stalled riddle

and wrestle the mind numb:
attention, fierce animal
I cry, as it coughs in my
face, dislodges boulders
in my belly, lie down, be
still, have mercy, here
is song, coils of song, play
it out, run with it.

[vi] "The Garden", Andrew Marvell

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
And their uncessant labours see
Crown'd from some single herb or tree,
Whose short and narrow verged shade
Does prudently their toils upbraid;
While all flow'rs and all trees do close
To weave the garlands of repose.

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence, thy sister dear!
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men;
Your sacred plants, if here below,
Only among the plants will grow.
Society is all but rude,
To this delicious solitude.

No white nor red was ever seen
So am'rous as this lovely green.
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
Cut in these trees their mistress' name;
Little, alas, they know or heed
How far these beauties hers exceed!
Fair trees! wheres'e'er your barks I wound,
No name shall but your own be found.

When we have run our passion's heat,
Love hither makes his best retreat.
The gods, that mortal beauty chase,
Still in a tree did end their race:
Apollo hunted Daphne so,
Only that she might laurel grow;
And Pan did after Syrinx speed,
Not as a nymph, but for a reed.

What wond'rous life in this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine and curious peach

Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons as I pass,
Ensnar'd with flow'rs, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find,
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide;
There like a bird it sits and sings,
Then whets, and combs its silver wings;
And, till prepar'd for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various light.

Such was that happy garden-state,
While man there walk'd without a mate;
After a place so pure and sweet,
What other help could yet be meet!
But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
To wander solitary there:
Two paradises 'twere in one
To live in paradise alone.

How well the skillful gard'ner drew
Of flow'rs and herbs this dial new,
Where from above the milder sun
Does through a fragrant zodiac run;
And as it works, th' industrious bee
Computes its time as well as we.
How could such sweet and wholesome hours
Be reckon'd but with herbs and flow'rs!

[vii] "Halfway to a Threeway", by Jim O'Rourke

I used to have none
Now with you, I've got one
If I could get just one more
Then you know what you're in for

You ain't getting any sleep tonight
I hope that you girls don't fight
And I hope that you won't run away
'Cause I'm halfway to a threeway

I tried again and again
To indulge in just one sin
All you have to do is lie there
While I push aside your wheelchair

And I'd do anything it takes
To change your mind and apply your brakes
So I know that you can't roll away
'Cause I'm halfway to a threeway

Can't wipe the smile off my face
When you strut by in your leg brace
You just can't climb the stairs
And you ain't got any hair

I just can't get you to sit
You and your stupid epileptic fits
And I know that you can't run away
'Cause I'm halfway to a threeway

As I lay you down on my bed
It don't matter that you're brain dead
I can get so close to ya
Now that you're in a coma

I'll make it sweet but short
When I pull out your life support
And I know that you'll just fade away
Now I'm halfway to a threeway
And I know that you'll just fade away
Now I'm halfway to a threeway